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Istanbul's Hagia Sophia – once-church, turned-mosque now historic site.

Unholy fights over holy sites

Emily Wierenga

AYODHYA, India – A verdict made by the Allahabad High Court last September, deciding a 150-year dispute over a 300-year-old controversial holy site in Ayodhya, India, is threatening to spark a new dispute between two groups claiming to own the religious territory. This is but the most recent example in a long history

of controversy incited by men who mistakenly put their faith in a location, versus the heart.

Ayodhya, located in Uttar Pradesh, marks both the site of the former Babri Mosque and the supposed birthplace of the Hindu god Rama. An 11th century Ram temple stood at Ayodhya until destroyed by troops loyal to Muslim

See **Holy sites** on page 2

Mike Wevers

EDMONTON, Alberta – Growing up in Southern Alberta, you certainly know the power of creation's mighty winds. The First Nations were early witnesses to winds which would sweep down from the mountains to the west in the middle of winter and blow unhindered across the plains. They named it Chinook, or snow eater, as metres of snow would literally melt under the wind's advance. Not surprisingly, then, if you go west from Lethbridge in Southern Alberta and head to Pincher Creek you will now witness long lines of giant windmills. They represent our attempt to harness that power and do good for creation at the same time.

Burning fossil fuels, primarily coal, generates the vast majority of Alberta's power and contributes to greenhouse gases. We do not share Canada's abundance of hydro-electric power, which provides ready access to a clean energy source for most Canadians. So jurisdictions like Alberta have much greater reason to try to find alternative sources to meet its energy demand.

That is why it is not surprising that the City of Medicine Hat, east of Lethbridge in the sun-drenched prairie of Alberta, announced that it is developing a \$9 million Concentrating Solar Thermal Energy Demonstration Project. This will involve building large parabolic reflective dishes to capture and concentrate the sun's rays, to heat water and to create steam to drive the electricity-generating turbine.

Tapping the power of sun and wind

Part III of a series on global energy issues



Can our energy demands be reconciled with climate change initiatives?

Electricity on demand

The problem with generating electricity is storing it. Consequently, power plants and grids have to be built to meet peak demand: those times when the power is needed. Burning fossil fuels means building power plants with more capacity than needed normally, leaving room to burn more fuel at peak times. Hydroelectricity also faces the same storage problem, resolving it by building water storage capacity behind the turbines built to meet peak demand. When power needs rise, more water is released to drive the turbines to generate the necessary power. This is what China is trying to achieve through its massive Three Gorges Dam.

What's this got to do with Pincher Creek's windmill array? Well, everything. Consumers want certainty of supply. The central problem with wind energy is we are never really certain when strong enough winds will be blowing to drive the windmills. Southern Alberta's winds, of course, blow

throughout the year, but there are days where the long blades stand still. So wind power, and its environmental benefits, can only be supplementary to meeting the energy demands of consumers. Use it when available, but don't rely on it. For this to work effectively, our power grids have to become much more interdependent between jurisdictions, sharing power to help meet peak demands, like B.C. currently does with Alberta.

The cost competitiveness of wind power generation relative to fossil fuel plants is entirely dependent on the fuel price. At current prices, fossil fuel plants make more economic sense. But this ignores the environmental toll of burning more fossil fuel, which has prompted the significant push by climate change advisors to institute a carbon tax. If burning fossil fuels included a tax reflecting their true price, alternative forms of cleaner energy would be more cost competitive.

See **Energy** on page 2

News

Holy sites *continued from page 1*

Ayodhya's mosque torn down in 1992; Muslim-Hindu tension remains taut.



Birthplace in recognition of Rama's birth.

While the first Hindu-Muslim clash over the site was recorded in 1853, and led to intermittent riots in years following, the most memorable dispute occurred in 1992 when 150,000 Hindu fundamentalists destroyed the mosque. Muslims responded with terrorism that claimed more than 2,000 lives. Since the mosque's destruction, barbed wire, steel fencing and troops have guarded the politically explosive site.

After nearly two decades of retaliation and bitterness, the High Court ruled on who owns Ayodhya – the Muslim Central Sunni Waqf Board, or a Hindu organization desiring to build a temple to Lord Rama in place of the former mosque. Meanwhile, 200,000 police and paramilitary forces patrolled the streets of Uttar Pradesh, and tens of thousands were placed on special duty in other vulnerable places.

It was decided that the site should be split, with one third going towards the Muslim community and the remaining two thirds to two Hindu groups, who had erected a small tent-shrine to Rama. "The majority ruled that

the location of the makeshift temple is the birthplace of Rama, and this spot cannot be shifted," said Ravi Shankar Prasad, a lawyer for one of the parties, in an interview with *The Telegraph*.

While immediate riots were successfully kept at bay, this December Hindu Mahasabha national President Swami Chakra Pani challenged the High Court's decision, seeking partial annulment of the majority verdict that handed over one third of the land to the Muslims. He also sought endorsement of the minority verdict of Justice Dharam Veer Sharma, who had wanted the entire land given to Hindus.

Sites attract attention

It's a dispute that's bound to continue, due to both religious parties finding meaning in the politics of the matter rather than in the virtues which founded the site. And it's a dispute which echoes the globe-round. In spite of the holiness of the sites – in spite of the faith which weaves these places together – they serve as hot spots for controversy and hate. Sites that should be sources of unity become landmarks of discord because their worshippers forget: it isn't a man-made structure which gives meaning to one's faith. It's faith that gives meaning to man-made structures.

Istanbul's Hagia Sophia, known for its architectural beauty, stood as the centre of Orthodox Christianity for 900 years until it was conquered in 1453 by the Ottomans. Five

hundred years following, it became a grand mosque of the sultans, only to be converted into a museum in 1935. Today it's a world heritage site, run by UNESCO since 1985. Christians mourn, looking at the once-church, turned-mosque turned-historic site. "I think it's hard for any Christian to go into the massive former church and not be nearly overwhelmed by melancholy," said Rod Dreher of BeliefNet. "I thought about how for nearly a thousand years, Christians prayed and sang and celebrated the Eucharist there, and must have thought it would last forever. . . I'm sure Muslims must feel the same sense of melancholy visiting the cathedral (formerly a mosque) at Cordoba, in Spain."

The Dome of the Rock, found in Jerusalem, is another site which has sparked centuries of religious conflict. Jews believe the sacred rock to be the place where Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac – an event which Muslims attribute to Mecca. The site is also believed to overlook both Solomon's and Herod's temples. The Rock serves as the Temple Mount for Muslims, their oldest Islamic monument from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended into heaven. One of the most contested religious sites in the world, it has been controlled by Israel since 1967. The Israeli government assigned a Muslim Council to oversee management of the site. In an attempt to maintain peace, a controversial ban was placed by the Muslim Council on prayers from non-Muslim visitors.

The holiest shrine of the Sikh religion, Amritsar's Golden Temple in Amritsar, has also incited dispute, with Sikh extremists



Both Jews and Muslims revere Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock.

converting it into a haven for terrorists in May of 1984. The Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, responded by ordering Operation Blue Star to remove the separatists. Indian troops and tanks forced the extremists from the temple. While militarily successful, the government's unconventional method was highly disputed and poorly looked upon, leading to a Sikh revolt worldwide. Four months after the assault, Gandhi was assaulted by two of her Sikh bodyguards. This was followed by 5,000 Sikhs being killed in anti-Sikh riots.

It is an ironic and common happening, this unholy fighting over holy sites. The vice of men has proven, repeatedly, to destroy the very virtues which the religious territories were founded on. In the end, it would seem that in spite of the significance religion plays in these global conflicts, it's ultimately a human-constructed war, with God having no part.

Emily Wierenga (www.emilywierenga.com) is an author, artist and freelance writer who lives with her husband and son in Neerlandia, AB.

Energy *continued from page 1*

Medicine Hat plans to build a solar trough like this Nevada one.

Solar power's limits

Achieving greater reliance on solar energy has the same challenges as wind power. They are both "intermittent" providers. Most solar energy is only available when the sun is shining. Work is being done on alternative energy storage devices, such as simply heating water to use for other purposes later. But to build the sun's energy into a reliable power grid means again that it can only be used as a supplementary source in an interdependent system.

The main obstacle to widespread solar power use is its significant upfront capital cost. According to a recent study done by the US Department of Energy, the estimated

lifetime cost of a solar photovoltaic (those black panels) power plant would be nearly four times higher per megawatt hour than a conventional coal plant. It would also be over three times the cost if the coal plant included a system to capture its carbon emissions and store it (carbon sequestration). Solar power systems may work for small applications, where individuals willingly incur upfront costs that have a longer-term payback and environmental benefit. However, it is very unlikely solar power will become more available widely, unless it is heavily subsidized to reduce its cost to power users.

The push for alternatives

So in a world where energy demands continue to grow and where greenhouse gas emissions continue to be a concern, alternative energy sources such as wind and solar power are, at best, only a small part of the world's solution. Initiatives continue on many fronts. China is not only building coal-fired power plants; it is driving forward with an ambitious hydroelectric program. There is renewed interest in nuclear energy, wherefrom, for example, France derives



Upfront cost of solar panels can be prohibitive.

over 75 percent of its power needs. Tidal power is expanding in seafront nations. And although first generation biofuels may not be an environmentally friendly option, biomass power plants using residual fibre are a welcomed addition to the power grid.

Meanwhile, we need to make sure our existing systems are as efficient as possible. In its 2010 Survey, the World Energy Council recognizes that even though the growth in renewable energy sources has been spectacular, it will take decades before their contribution is sizeable. While work continues on their development,

the Council states we must improve existing power systems: a one percentage point improvement in the efficiency of a conventional coal plant, for example, results in a two to three percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. Highly efficient modern coal plants emit almost forty percent less CO₂ than the average coal plant in service.

Living with less?

While each initiative provides only a marginal benefit, cumulatively these new or renewed sources of energy will achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and help climate change initiatives. To achieve meaningful change, however, consumption needs to be addressed as well. The challenge to the developed world is to learn how to live with less, so that the developing world may have opportunities to grow economically and provide better services to a greater proportion of its people.

Mike Wevers is an independent consultant, retired from the Alberta Government as an Assistant Deputy Minister. He lives in Edmonton.



News

Academic freedom and the CAUT

In a recent bulletin published by the Canadian Association of University Teachers, CAUT announced that they have added Crandall University (formerly Atlantic Baptist University) to Trinity Western University and Canadian Mennonite University on their list of Universities that Impose a Faith or Ideological Test. They have concluded that the faith-based nature of these institutions and their requirement that all employees hold a personal Christian faith are in conflict with academic freedom.

Academic freedom, the independence of individual



Crandall University is located in Moncton, New Brunswick.

researchers from external pressures, has always been staunchly defended by CAUT. They recently chastised the administrators of Wilfrid Laurier University (where I teach) and the University of Waterloo for failing to uphold academic freedom in an administrative dismissal case (a conclusion hotly contested by the two institutions). In another well-publicized case, CAUT actively supported Dr. Nancy Olivieri when she publicized her concerns about a drug she was testing, despite threats from the drug company funding her research and sanctions by her employer, the University of Toronto.

CAUT is right to defend academic freedom. As I have argued in a previous column, freedom to conduct research from a variety of perspectives is critical for the advancement of knowledge. I treasure my



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academic freedom as a neuroscientist and as a Christian. But academic freedom, like free speech, is not an absolute right. There are a number of legal restrictions on what a person may say and defend in an academic context. Just as it is illegal to shout "fire" in a crowded theatre (unless you smell smoke or see flames!), academics are not permitted, for example, to publicly deny the Holocaust or to produce an anti-Semitic tirade. Hate crime laws restrict what a researcher may argue about, regarding an ethnic or religious group. These laws sometimes lead to complicated discussions. For instance, when an academic researching white supremacist groups uncovers a nest of anti-black views, to what extent may these views be published as part of the research study? What is the line between the necessary (and thus lawful) outlining of research data or conclusions and the unnecessary (and thus unlawful) dissemination of hateful speech? It is only by studying such groups that important issues can be understood, but researchers involved should rightly remain mindful of hate crime laws. Such laws should apply to academics as much as to the general population.

Embracing a different freedom

Individual rights, such as academic freedom, have long been in tension with the rights and needs of the collective community. Christians, as part of the body of Christ, have a higher view of collective needs than may be evident in our society. Christians are subject to the authority of our Lord, a shared worldview. Developing and maintaining this shared worldview is undoubtedly difficult, and points of tension never subside completely (not unlike the decades-long discussion over women's roles in church office in the Christian Reformed denomination). For Christians these tensions are like a family discussion, and while unfortunately we sometimes stop speaking with each other, the reality is that we are all still grafted on the same vine.

As Reformed Christians we believe that the body of Christ encompasses all of our creation, including the University. Thus it is possible to argue that the constraints that give us freedom in Christ also apply to our communal academic life. This shared worldview needs to be protected and cherished.

For me at a public university, my faith commitment is an individual position; it is not explicitly valued by my university. Consequently, I do not have the support of an immediate faith community in my academic life. At a Christian institution I would research and teach in a "family" open to exploring specific issues of how God's creation works. While Christian academics do not – and should not – agree on all issues, we do approach creation with the shared belief that it is God's world. I find the idea of being part of such a community attractive.

So I've concluded that CAUT has accurately captured what is an important positive feature of these three, and perhaps other, Christian institutions. These institutions should advertise their inclusion on CAUT's list, viewing it as a strength and a part of their vision of being a community of Christian scholars. It not only requires healthy consideration of how to deal with the complexities that arise, but on the whole, provides a loving support of our academics in their work. Other Christian universities should ask to be put on this list. ➤



From the Lab

Rudy Eikelboom

Spain dedicates World Cup trophy to St. James

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, Spain (CNA/Europa Press) – The president of the Spanish soccer association, Angel Maria Villar, and the coach of Spain's national team, Vicente del Bosque, dedicated the country's World Cup trophy to St. James the Apostle on December 27.

The Spanish soccer team won the World Cup in South Africa in July 2010.

Though Spain has become increasingly secular, it is officially Roman Catholic. Many of those Catholics hold the view that the saints know what goes on in each person's life and are capable of bringing humanity's concerns to God.

Villar spoke at the Cathedral of St. James in Santiago de Compostela and referred to the Spanish soccer team's "devotion to the apostle." Villar recalled that during his last visit to the cathedral in April 2010 he prayed for the success of the team at the World Cup. He believes that St. James helped them become world champions.

Villar noted that the 2010 victory was an achievement the country had been dreaming of since 1934. "We had won many other tournaments – almost all of them. We had triumphed in the greatest of soccer matches but not in the World Cup. We put everything we had into it, every human and technological resource at our disposal, as well as an unbeatable group of players, a truly golden generation. We tied up every loose



end, and we prayed to you for victory. It was very difficult. We faced great rivals. But we had faith in you, St. James, and in the quality of our players and their coaches."

On July 11, 2010, he concluded, "all of our dreams came true." Villar asserted that they won the Cup "by following the paths you showed us 2,000 years ago. These paths are none other than those of humility, kindness, generosity, solidarity, patience, temperance, faith and hope in what we are doing. Thus we traveled to South Africa and thus we return home to you, in Santiago de Compostela." ➤

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Editorials

Sport as liturgy



Michael Buma

The absurdist playwright Eugène Ionesco hated watching soccer so much when he was a teenager that to even encounter the game later in life brought back painful memories: "The sight and sound of it . . . reminds me of my childhood, when I had to tear myself painfully away from my books in order to watch those imbecilic, stultifying games."

Those imbecilic, stultifying games! As an academic who studies the socio-cultural aspects of sport, I've often encountered this sort of dismissive attitude. *Why not do research on something more important, like the constitution or climate change or Margaret Atwood? Surely, you can't be serious that you wrote your PhD thesis on hockey?* Well, I did. I happen to love sports, and conduct my research and teaching on the subject from a position of "critical support" (to borrow a phrase from sports historian Bruce Kidd).

Furthermore, I happen to agree with Christian sports sociologist Shirl Hoffman's suggestion that the ubiquity of sport actually constitutes proof of its divine appointment. God took pleasure in creating us as bodily creatures, and we glorify him when we express and explore our physicality through sport or appreciate the skilfulness of others who do the same. I would submit that I'm in good company holding these beliefs: the Pauline letters use sport as a metaphor for Christian living so frequently that some have speculated the Apostle himself was an athlete or at least an avid fan. But even for those of us who, like Ionesco, find the omnipresence of sports to be oppressive, disinteresting or banal, I think there are some very good reasons why Christians should pay close attention to sports and sporting cultures in our society.

Sport as religion?

When Christian historian and sociologist Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy fled Hitler's Germany for the United States and took a teaching position at Harvard, he quickly recognized one major cultural difference: while German students responded to

classical and literary allusions, American students were far more intrigued by allusions to the world of sport. According to Rosenstock-Huessy, sport "encompasses all of [their] virtues and experiences, affection and interests; therefore, I have built my entire sociology around the experiences an American has in athletics and games."

In this configuration sports start to sound rather like religion, and many critics and commentators have in fact suggested that sports have replaced or superseded religion in post-Christian societies. Although I disagree, there's something to be said for this way of thinking. While sports have little to say about metaphysics or eschatology, for instance, they tend to be intensely liturgical. In Christian life and worship, liturgy testifies both to an ordered universe and a proper order of human conduct. It gives us necessary structure and allows us to learn and absorb through repetition and rehearsal. What we don't often recognize is that sports tend to do the same. When we are repeatedly exposed to certain values, beliefs, and assumptions, most of us can't help but internalize them to some extent. Cultural theory calls this "interpolation," a term that refers to the processes by which ideology becomes incorporated into the way we see the world as though it inherently belongs or cannot be changed. When it comes to sports, this often isn't a bad thing: sports can be an excellent way to learn teamwork, cooperation, fair play, and to stay physically and mentally healthy. But the values of sporting cultures can also be harmful and negative, especially those of high level professional sports in our society.

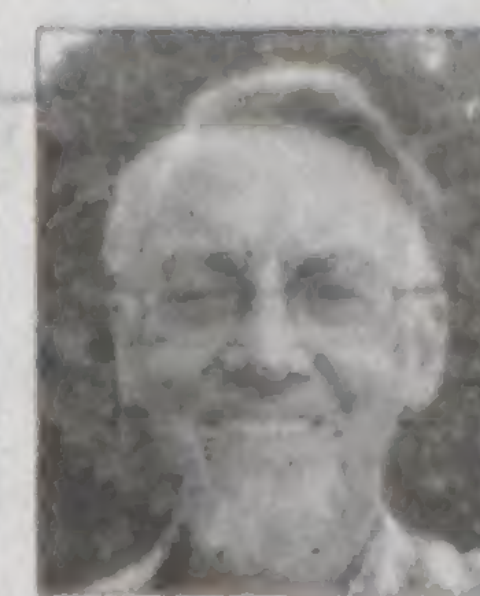
Evidence of sexism

One quick example that I often give my students is the nominal difference between the North American men's and women's professional basketball leagues. The men's league is called the National Basketball Association (NBA) while the women's league is called the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). Why not call the men's league the MNBA? The implicit message here is that sports are a male domain, a preserve of "manly" values, and, ultimately, that men are somehow "better" than women because they tend to be physically stronger. In other words, the perceived need to distinguish "women's basketball" from "basketball" suggests that women don't belong in sports and need to be singled out as different or exceptional when they play (sports sociologists refer to this sort of delineation as "gender marking").

This is clearly an idea that Christians should reject and condemn, because it is one of many ways in which sporting cultures in our society run counter to the proper Scriptural order of things. Hoffman's latest book, *Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports*, makes a thorough and compelling argument that, rather than working to transform sports, North American Christians have often been transformed by them. Whether we love, hate or are passively indifferent toward sports, Christians should recognize both the need to reclaim this fallen sphere of culture for Christ and the danger that we ourselves might be "reformed" in its often troublesome image.

Michael Buma (mikebuma@gmail.com) teaches in the English and Kinesiology departments at the University of Western Ontario.

Only God's truth can set you free



Bert Witvoet

A recent news story about a study of religion and life satisfaction drew my attention to the research paper that spawned the article. Chaeydoon Lim and Robert D. Putnam published their paper "Religion, Social Networks and Life Satisfaction" in the *American Sociological Review*. They concluded that it is not so much faith or prayer or listening to sermons that makes people happy but building intimate social networks in church. In other words, it's the regular attendance of religious services plus the addition of some close friends in that community that makes people score high on the scale of life satisfaction.

Good news for Christians? According to the authors, it does not matter what your religion is as long as you attend services regularly and have co-religious friends. So Christians have no advantage. Mormons and Jews who visit their house of worship regularly and associate with fellow believers also report a high level of life satisfaction. The authors do say that secular networks of friends cannot duplicate such a high score. So religious observance is good, if you want to be happy, that is.

I have two reservations regarding the value of this study. First of all, the report tends to lead people into a relativistic view of religions. It makes it look as if the "happiness principle" is the most important issue facing people today. That is a misleading notion. When it comes to religion, the most prominent question always has to be, "What is truth?" not, "What will make me happy?" Truth is not, first of all, a road to happiness but a road that leads to the source of life eternal – God. Without truth, we perish, no matter how satisfied we are for the moment.

Secondly, it bothers me that prayer and faith and even sermons are not given much weight in this report when it comes to impacting our level of contentment. I agree that people who regularly attend church and enjoy friendship with like-minded believers get a substantial benefit from that. I would not say, however, that their satisfaction exists *apart* from faith in God. How could a sociological study measure the impact of one's faith, anyway?

Surprising turn of events

In order to throw a bit of a monkey wrench into this study about life satisfaction, let me tell you about Jewish dissident Natan Sharansky, who was imprisoned in 1977 by the KGB, the Soviet Secret police. I found his story in *Out of the Depths* by Bernhard W. Anderson. Although Sharansky was a Jew, he was not a very observant one. In other words, he did not attend worship services much nor did he develop a strong network of believing Jews before he was imprisoned. And he certainly did not improve his chances of gaining much life satisfaction by being in jail. According to the research by Chaeyoon and Putnam, he was headed for a depressing situation – no synagogue, no friends, no satisfaction.

However, things turned out differently for Sharansky. His one and only possession in jail was the book of Psalms given to him by his wife. Out of boredom he began to read it. This book of Psalms saved his life, he later testified. He read the Psalms regularly and even memorized them. He was greatly and strangely comforted by this rich store of prayers and songs. His level of life satisfaction went up significantly.

When in 1986, after nine years of detention, he was finally released at an airport in a choreographed moment intended to give the West a favourable impression of the Soviet Union's thirst for justice, Sharansky spoiled the performance. Instead of heading for the plane that would take him to freedom, he began to ask for his Psalm book, which had been confiscated for the so-many-eth time. The Soviet official in charge told him that he had received everything that had been permitted. Sharansky dropped to the snow-covered ground. "I won't move until you give me back my Psalm book," he insisted. When there was no response, Sharansky lay down in the snow and shouted, "Give me back my Psalm book!" The official finally gave him back his Psalm book. On the plane to freedom, Sharansky opened his book of Psalms to keep a vow he had made in prison. He read Psalm 30:

*I extol you, O Lord, for you have lifted me up,
and not let my enemies rejoice over me.
O Lord, my God, I cried out to you, and you healed me.
O Lord, you brought me up from Sheol,
preserved me from going down into the Pit.*

I wonder how the researchers will explain this level of satisfaction without the aid of social networking, unless you count the support group of prison guards who made life miserable for Sharansky.

Bert Witvoet and his wife Alice live in St. Catharines, Ontario.

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Letters

My journey with books

Helen Tangelder

My journey with books has been a long one. As a child, I grew up with books, all the way from *The Book of Knowledge* encyclopedia, the Bobsey Twin series, and the Grace Livingstone Hill books. I kept my nursing and my Bible college textbooks. Not until I met John did I really know what it was to have books in the house. On our very first date, I mentioned that I had Berkoff's *Systematic Theology* textbook. John said that maybe he could borrow it sometime. I thought to myself that in no way he was going to get that textbook.

During our first three months of marriage, we lived with John's parents in Oshawa before we moved to Grand Rapids, where John studied at Calvin Seminary. During those three months I decided to straighten out John's bookcases. That meant putting the books all in neat rows according to height and size. I was tired of looking at messy bookshelves. John was not a happy camper when he came home and found out that his books were not in subject order. Oh well, live and learn. Early marriage days!

Throughout his ministry, the supply of books increased. John mostly bought books at garage sales, library sales, or people would kindly give him books from their collections. John never said no to that. Then we needed more bookshelves and more space. In all our moves, the books came with us. From Vernon, B.C. to Wellandport, Ontario, they came by train in the deep of winter. None were lost. John took about 400 books with us to the Philippines – ones he needed for teaching at the seminary. It was a challenge to sort and choose. He took some Dutch books as well, only to find that the bookworms liked the glue in his Dutch books, and not in the cheap paperbacks. In all our pastorates, John had his study in the house, taking up a bedroom for his books. In Wellandport, the church built a special addition onto the parsonage for his study. It was much needed. Having a family of six, we needed all the other rooms. The quantity of books increased greatly.



John was happiest when he had a book and pen in his hand to make his own personal notes and scribbles. He did not use a highlighter for his markings. John was an eclectic reader, having read many topics, ranging from the *Communist Manifesto* to Francis Schaeffer's writings. One of his all-time favourite books was Augustine's *Confessions*. He also loved C.S. Lewis, Chuck Colson, Martin Lloyd-Jones, Abraham Kuyper. There was no end to his favourite writers. I could tell

when John was tired. He would pull out a good Dutch novel. Though he was a reader of serious literature, John enjoyed a good mystery – the likes of Agatha Christie and G. K. Chesterton.

Looking after books was a challenge, especially when it came to dusting and straightening up the shelves. Books are real dust collectors. Every year, around Christmas and New Year, I would take books off the shelf and give them a good dusting. I kept that up till the last two years, when I simply did not have the time. I



How long have you been reading CC?

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would find pieces of paper stuck in a book, along with clippings of articles and any other kind of paper for his notes.

John was often asked if he had read them all. Yes, he would say. Mind you, some of them were strictly reference material for his sermons and articles. Throughout the years he gave away books or threw some out. Did it make a dent on the shelf? Hardly.

Yes, books were part and parcel of John's ministry and our married life. Books were his tools, the way carpenters and painters have tools. They had to be accessible somewhere, even if it meant a pile on the floor by his chair.

In the last two months of John's life, he could not hold a pen or book, let alone have the stamina to read. That was a blow – to give up something he loved dearly all his life. One of the hardest things for me was to go into his study, where I saw piles of books he had gathered for his articles, his pens, his notes, and the discarded scraps of paper in his wastebasket – all just where he left it.

A year later I sorted John's Dutch books, computer-filed each title and author, and boxed 1300 books, which I took to the Canadian Reformed Seminary in Hamilton. I did the same with 3600 English titles, which I dropped off at Redeemer University College in Ancaster. Some books went to family and several to John's colleagues. I wanted to honour John's will about his books.

So this is my journey with books – from a few boxes when we arrived in Vernon, B.C. to over 200 boxes when I disposed of them recently. The journey has been long and good. Do I have regrets about living with books? Indeed – NO!

Helen Tangelder lives in London, Ontario.



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News

Britain: Queen marks 400th anniversary of King James Bible

LONDON (TCI) – The 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) was a centerpiece of festive messages from the Queen and Archbishop of Canterbury this past Christmas.

During her message broadcast on Christmas Day, Queen Elizabeth highlighted the King James translation's "glorious language," saying it has "given many of us the most widely recognized and beautiful descriptions of the birth of Jesus Christ."

The Queen's message came from Hampton Court where, she told viewers, King James had "convened a conference of churchmen of all shades of opinion to discuss the future of Christianity in this country."

"The King agreed to commission a new translation of the

Bible that was acceptable to all parties. This was to become the King James or Authorized Bible," said Elizabeth. She concluded by noting that it is still "acknowledged as a masterpiece of English prose and the most vivid translation of the Scriptures."



Queen spoke to the world from Hampton Court, site of KJ conference.

Music editor: Revised missal will revive Catholic church music



ROME (NCR) – The managing editor of *Sacred Music* says that the forthcoming revised translation of the Roman missal will likely augur a revival of sacred music in the Roman Catholic church. A missal is a "service book," with music, used in Catholic worship worldwide.

"This is a chance for a new beginning..." said Jeffrey Tucker. "The new translation is so much better, so much more beautiful. People will notice immediately, not just in the order of Mass but in all the celebrant parts, too. The chants are now embedded in the structure of the missal; this was not previously true."

people to Mass?" Tucker replied, "So far as I can tell, the only people who really argue this way are old people. It's true that plenty of young people are not interested in true liturgical music, but those same people are not interested in Catholicism either. How do we draw people to the faith? By lying about it and substituting false teaching? I don't think so. The faith draws people when it is not ashamed of itself and when it has the ring of truth. It is the same with liturgical music..."

Tucker continued, "We are living in times of transition, and young people seem to know this even more than older people. I don't think there is any doubt where that transition is headed. People are discovering the sacred music tradition. If you look around at the Catholic music world, you quickly find that this is where the interest and energy is. This is the future."

The new missal edition and additional musical-liturgical revisions will help Catholic parishes make the transition "from silly songs to serious Gregorian chant," asserted Tucker.

From silly songs to Gregorian chant

When sked "What do you say to people who think that 'contemporary' or rock music is necessary to attract young

CRWRC volunteers lend help in flooded New Brunswick

BURTTS CORNER, N.B. (CRCNA) – As travelers and their luggage finally reached their Christmas destinations after being delayed by a massive snowstorm on the East Coast, an amazing 38 volunteers gathered in Burtt's Corner, New Brunswick, to begin clean-up from severe flooding.

CRWRC Disaster Response Services, in collaboration with Samaritan's Purse and other organizations, provided volunteers from CRC classes in Eastern Canada to clean-up and otherwise assist with flood recovery from a torrential 24-hour rainstorm on December 13. In addition, volunteers from local Mennonite and other congregations arrived from the Centreville and Fredericton areas.

CRWRC-DRS program manager Art Oppenwall said that "with coordination from area managers Dirk and Margaret Van Oord, CRC congregations in eastern Canada [sent] volunteers, and churches nearby [helped] to house and feed people."

The volunteers were joined in Burtt's Corner by Kirk MacDonald, the provincial government representative, and by MP Mike Allen, to clean out and repair flood-damaged homes. The region's public safety minister Robert Trevors said that the deluge was the second-most expensive natural disaster in New Brunswick in recent memory. While the clean-up was going on, local weather conditions included not more rain but heavy snow and temperatures well below freezing.

New volunteers from CRWRC and other organizations continued to arrive on the site each day for a week. Dirk Van Oord reported that nearly a dozen homeowners needing critical assistance were identified in an area about an hour from Burtt's Corner. In all, the heavy rain and a foot of flood water made 100 homes uninhabitable.



The flood response in New Brunswick is an inter-denominational effort coordinated by CRWRC Disaster Response Services and Samaritan's Purse, which provides oversight, tools and home inspections.

CRC volunteers have been asked for help via bulletin announcements, pulpit requests, through local ministerial associations and in newspapers in the Fredericton area.

To support CRWRC's response in New Brunswick, checks marked "Storms 2010" may still be sent to denominational headquarters.

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PO Box 5070 STN LCD
Burlington ON L7R 3Y8
Phone: 1-800-730-3490

or:
CRWRC-US
2850 Kalamazoo Ave SE
Grand Rapids MI 49560
Phone: 1-800-55-CRWRC

Iraq jumps nine spots in world's worst persecutors list

BAGDHAD, Iraq (Christian Post) – Open Doors, a ministry that supports persecuted Christians, ranked Iraq eighth, up from 17th, in its 2011 World Watch List. The country suffered its worst year of Christian persecution since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

The onslaught of attacks in Iraq began with the Baghdad church massacre on October 31, 2010, that killed 58 people. The devastating attack was followed by unrelenting bombings and shootings targeting Christians throughout Iraq, including a few incidents where militants invaded Christian homes and killed people sitting in their living rooms. A series of 10 bombs exploded in Christian homes in Baghdad on December 30, killing two people and wounding more than a dozen.

At least 90 Christians were killed last year in Iraq, while hundreds more were injured in bomb and gun attacks, according to Open Doors.

Eight of the top 10 countries where it is most dangerous to practice Christianity have Islam as the dominant religion.

"We have always, in 55 years working with persecuted Christians, responded only to one agenda – what do they [persecuted Christians] need? The reason we do the World Watch List is one response to that question: their request to making the world more aware of what is going on in their countries," says Carl Moeller, president and CEO of Open Doors USA.

Please pray!

The annual list, compiled by the research department of Open Doors International, helps Christians target their prayers. It is also a powerful tool to help governments and public policy bodies understand Christian persecution around the world. The list has been used by the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and the European Union, according to Moeller.

The report states that persecution has increased in seven of the top 10 countries on the list, even though in some cases the countries' rank did not change. Afghanistan rose from sixth to third and Uzbekistan, from 10th to ninth. Despite not making the top 10 list, Open Doors highlighted Pakistan in its reporting, noting that it jumped from Number 14 to Number 11 this year. Mauritania, however, dropped from Number eight to Number 13. Communist North Korea, meanwhile, topped the list for the ninth consecutive year.

"Please pray for brave believers like Asia Noreen, who remains in prison in Pakistan after being sentenced to death on a false blasphemy charge," Moeller urged. "And for the dwindling Christian population in Iraq who are facing 'religicide' from Muslim extremists."

The World Watch List is based on an extensive questionnaire sent to Open Doors co-workers, key church leaders and recognized experts in 77 societies. The questionnaire examines every aspect of persecution, including the degree of legal restriction, state attitudes, how free the church is to organize itself, as well as incidents of persecution such as church burnings, anti-Christian riots and even martyrdom. The reporting period for this year's list was from November 1, 2009, through October 31, 2010.

Top 10 on World Watch List 2011:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. North Korea | 6. Maldives |
| 2. Iran | 7. Yemen |
| 3. Afghanistan | 8. Iraq |
| 4. Saudi Arabia | 9. Uzbekistan |
| 5. Somalia | 10. Laos |

News

Dordt students win film award

With files from Sarah Vander Plaats, Dordt College

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa (CRCNA) – *Students Without Borders*, a film by two Dordt College digital media students, has won a gold Ava Award, which is part of an international awards competition that recognizes outstanding achievement by creative filmmaking professionals.



The film, which is in DVD format, is intended to explain American culture as seen through the eyes of international students.

"Imagine [going to school] and not being able to speak, read, listen, or learn in your own language," said Vero Visser Galvan, an international student at Dordt College.

This is a struggle that many international students studying in North America face, and it is the subject of the new Prairie Grass Productions film, created by Daniel Kauten and Dale Vande Griend.

"I hope the video will be used in a way that makes the transition to American life a little easier, but I also hope it gives American students an insight into the life of an international student," said Kauten, a 2010 Dordt graduate.

The year-long independent studies project helped hone the young filmmaker's skills beyond traditional academic learning. "Doing something like this with just us really helps to teach things you can't learn [only] in a classroom. You learn what works and what doesn't. A book can't always tell you that," said Vande Griend, a senior digital media major at Dordt.

After the film was complete, Kauten and Vande Griend shared the remaining workload with other students. Business administration students Braden Kooiker, Sarah Skidmore, Lauren Ridder and Jordan Herrema came up with a distribution and promotion plan for the film. Graphic design students Michelle Stam, Ellie Dykstra, Aaron Yoder and Alyssa Hoogendoorn (the copy writer) created packaging for the DVD.

Though the film was created at Dordt, the fact that it won the gold Ava indicates that its quality and storytelling make it marketable to other colleges and universities in the United States as well. ➤

Redeemer explores relation between faith and work

ANCASTER, Ont. (RUC) – In mid-January Redeemer University College was the setting for a lecture and discussion that considered the relationship between faith and work.

Called "The World and Our Calling," this year's featured speaker was Dr. Steven Garber, who is director of The Washington Institute. The institute calls itself "a still-point . . . connecting knowing and doing, heart and mind, belief and behaviour, worldview and way of life."



At the event, open to the academic community and to the public, Garber explored "the relationship of faith to vocation and to the responsible engagement of the culture" in North America and beyond.

Garber is described as having "a classroom among many people in many places – wherever he is and whatever he is doing, always wanting to understand more fully the integral character of faith to vocation to culture."

He is the author of *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief and Behavior* (2nd ed., 2007) and was also a contributor to the volumes *Faith Goes to Work: Reflections From the Marketplace*, and *Get Up Off Your Knees: Preaching the U2 Catalogue*.

For many years he taught on Washington's Capitol Hill in the American Studies Program, and is particularly interested in the relationship of popular culture to political culture; from that appointment he became the Scholar-in-Residence for the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

The Washington Institute's website, dealing as the institute itself does with "faith, vocation, culture," can be seen at www.washingtoninst.org.

'Einstein's God' initiates Calvin College January lectures

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Albert Einstein did not believe in a God who interacts with each of us and rewards and punishes his creatures. Yet the world-renowned physicist did believe in the "mystery of eternity of life," as well as in "the marvelous structure of reality," said Krista Tippet, host of the popular American National Public Radio (NPR) program "On Being" formerly known as "Speaking of Faith."



To kick-off Calvin College's annual "January Series" of lectures at the beginning of this month, Tippet spoke about Einstein (and other scientists) and how science interacts with faith.

Her presentation was called "Einstein's God: Conversations About Science and the Human Spirit." That is also the name of her new book. Tippet is a graduate of Yale Divinity School and a former journalist.

She discussed similarities between science and religion and what she thinks people can learn from each. "Science and religion together help inform all of life in its totality," she said. "Something eternal lies behind what both science and religion have to teach. We do them a disservice in this culture by reducing discussion about them to debates and sound bites."

Tippet's book contains interviews with 13 guests from her radio program: physicists, physicians, psychologists, authors,

poets, educators and clergy, all of whom offer their perspectives on the human search for meaning. Some are Christians; others passionately approach the question from a secular viewpoint.

Mystery, not 'rules'

The granddaughter of a Baptist preacher, Tippet had many questions that weren't answered by the church she attended as a youth. Today, she says, she finds herself much more interested in the great mysteries of existence – but "not the rules for living." She asserted "I appreciate more and more the notion of mystery being right alongside what we see as truth. We're living in a moment when we are poised to learn so much more . . . We don't know what is essential and amazing that is happening right now that will keep us alive and sustainable 100 years from now."

Once she left home for college and then a career as an overseas correspondent, faith in God was not a subject she thought much about, she admitted. She was "probably an agnostic at the time," though didn't think about it seriously enough to claim that "label." Now, she says, "I have less and less patience with religious abstractions that are utterly disconnected from the world, from how we live every day," she said.

Tippet's program airs on some 200 public radio stations in the U.S. and internationally via the web. Tippet has won a Peabody award for the program.

Calvin College's 24th annual January Series runs through January 25. This year the lectures were also webcast to 30 remote locations continent-wide and overseas in Lithuania. ➤

Follow-up: Apple Computer now calls Christian belief 'objectionable and potentially harmful'

Marian Van Til

WASHINGTON, D.C. – CC previously reported that Apple Computer Corp. had removed the Manhattan Declaration iPhone application from its app store. The Manhattan Declaration is a statement of orthodox Christian belief originally signed in 2009 by 150 Christian leaders "known for their public witness on behalf of justice, human rights and the common good." Since then a movement has grown around the declaration and its signers, and a half-million North American Christians have signed the declaration.

ManhattanDeclaration.org created an iPhone application last year which was available at the Apple iPhone store. It became popular. Then in late fall the app was pulled by Apple, developers of the iPhone. According to Apple's public relations department, the Manhattan Declaration is "offensive to large groups of people."

That "a statement of conscience signed by half a million Christians in support of the sanctity of human life, traditional marriage and religious freedom" could be seen as offensive was highly troubling not only to Charles Colson and the other original signers but to the hundreds of thousands of orthodox Christians who support the declaration and its intent.

Colson explained, "Over the [American] Thanksgiving holiday, some advocates of same-sex marriage petitioned Apple, saying that the Manhattan Declaration promoted hate

and homophobia. So Apple pulled the app."

The app contained a questionnaire that users could answer and that "became a lightning rod for gay activists," according to Colson. Two of its questions were: "Do you believe in protecting life from the moment of conception?" and "Do you support same-sex relationships?"



'Triumph of political correctness'

Colson continued, "It was a triumph of political correctness and ad hominem attack over civil discourse. And I am saddened – and very concerned – that a pioneering company like Apple, whose products are used by untold millions to interact and communicate, chose to shut down the dialogue over one of the defining cultural issues of our time."

In response, thousands of Christians petitioned Apple, the Manhattan Declaration app was resubmitted to Apple on December 8 and Apple was asked to reconsider. Apple has just released its second response. That response is even harsher than the first one was.

Apple again rejected the app, asserting in a letter dated December 22 that "references or commentary about a religious, cultural or ethnic group that are defamatory, offensive, mean-spirited or likely to expose the targeted group to harm or

violence will be rejected. We have evaluated the content of this application and consider its contents to be objectionable and potentially harmful to others."

Colson and two other original signers, Robert George and Timothy George (a divinity school dean), said in a press release, "What this means is that the teachings of the Bible itself are offensive, even dangerous." They are urging Christians to continue to voice their support for the app and for the Manhattan Declaration, and to let Apple know of their support.

Chilling to all faith groups

"We have to persevere until Apple relents. If we don't, it will mean that merely citing Scripture on some key moral issues is grounds for removal of apps and the limitation of speech entailed by that," said the three men. "This app is no more objectionable than any other app that includes the Bible or the Quran, or other religious texts that speak to moral issues. The result of this decision will be chilling to all faith groups."

They added, "Apple may be banking on the fact that people have short memories; that this issue will just go away after a few days." Signing the petition at the Manhattan Declaration website will "make sure this doesn't happen," they urged fellow Christians. Nearly 60,000 people have signed. The site and petition are at www.ManhattanDeclaration.org. ➤

Columns

Called to singleness



"Do you think you're called to singleness?" a married friend of mine asked me a couple of years ago.

"I'm called to singleness right now, I guess," I ventured.

"No – but, I mean, do you have The Gift of Singleness?" he asked.

"Right now I do," I knew I was being difficult, but I continued. "Sometimes I think I would like to serve God as a single, and other times I think it might be right for me to serve God through marriage and family. Sometimes people end up single for their whole lives even though when they were younger they had thought they would marry."

"That's different," he said. "When you have The Gift of Singleness, you know. You don't desire marriage."

And I had believed that for a while too,

but I don't think God's will works in these set categories that one needs to recognize at the onset of adult life.

I don't deny that there are a number of people who feel committed to living lives as singles from a young age. But I think there are a number of people who are called to singleness and find out along the way. Or people who remain open to marriage throughout their whole lives but never find a person with whom they wish to spend the rest of their lives. This whole topic raises some deeper issues about our theology of providence and God's guidance in our lives that I won't get into right now. Suffice it to say that I believe if one is single, she or he is called, and *gifted*, to serve God in that role for whatever length of time that singleness continues.

Finding fulfillment

The above conversation reminded me of a woman named Jennifer I met years ago at a church potluck in downtown Toronto. She was probably the first person I had ever spoken to expressly about embracing a life of singleness. She was beautiful, confident, vivacious, talented and authentic, the kind of woman that I, in my early twenties, hoped to be like in 40 years. She has remained in my

memory as one of the most self-realized and contented people I have ever met.

But she had not always felt this way. As we shared a meal, she spoke openly about how it had been her dream to get married and have a family, but she never met the man she was looking for. After four years of waiting and intensely praying, she began to doubt, finding it difficult to reconcile her unfulfilled dreams with the promise she had heard throughout her Christian upbringing that God will provide the desires of our hearts. Eventually her anger drove her to abandon her commitment to church and God. After ten years, she could not resist God's love anymore and came to accept that her life, though different than what she had expected and prayed for, was beautiful.

"And now, my friends are jealous of me!" Jennifer said, and listed the different benefits she experienced as a single – benefits that for years she had not recognized.

I was so moved by how Jennifer was living a life of contentment out of the ashes of unfulfilled dreams. By contentment, I don't mean resolving to grin and bear it or to make the most of a bad situation. I mean, rather, a deep sense of fulfillment: though she had once planned for things to be different, now she

would not have it any other way.

A gift of blessing

It can become easy in our church circles to feel that family is the ultimate calling, that it is the foremost way to serve God. It can also become easy to believe that if we want a good thing and are trusting God for it, we'll get it. These teachings and mentalities can leave people like Jennifer feeling betrayed by God when they find, as life progresses, that perhaps their callings will not transpire as expected. While marriage and family are very good things, they are not the only good things, and are not the only good ways in which to serve. Sometimes life doesn't take us in the directions we expect it to, but this in no way negates God's calling. When our prayers are not answered in the ways which we expect, we may grieve, we may be disappointed, but let us never feel that God's calling is absent from any given stage of life. Singleness is still a gift, full of blessings and joy and to be used for God's glory, regardless of whether it's chosen or not.

Melissa Kuipers (mckuip@gmail.com) is completing a Masters of Arts in Creative Writing at the University of Toronto.



Spending time profitably

Our metaphors are revealing. We talk about "spending" time as if it were an economic thing. "How did you spend your time this Christmas?"

If I *spend* time, then it is used up, gone, *kaput*.

We are told that God has put eternity in men's minds (Ecclesiastes 3:11). I doubt that the teaching of Ecclesiastes will change our use of the phrase, *spending time*, but it is worth considering.

The opposite of spending time must be *saving time*. I know that, in my youth, we were all influenced by devices that would save time. I'm not sure that socks are matched and sorted any more often because we have automatic washers and dryers. Surreptitious peeks in other people's laundry rooms have also convinced me that dirty clothes baskets seem to be always full. Dishes often come out of the dishwasher directly onto the table or into the cupboard just before the machine is re-filled.

I'm still trying to figure out what one does with the *time* one saves. Where does a person store saved time? More importantly, what does a person *do* with time that is saved? As far as I can tell, people "spend" saved-up time doing things that keep them busier and busier: recreation, travel and so on. In other words, the time that is saved is soon "spent."

My question for the new year is this: Who told you that saving time is always a virtue? Was Mr. Geertsma foolish because he wanted to spade his garden instead of using

a rototiller? Is driving through a car-wash a wiser use of time than spraying and soaping and having a water-fight while you clean your car on a hot summer afternoon? Is sending an e-card something "better" to do than making your own greeting card and hand-writing a message, preferably with a fountain pen?

Wisely wasteful

Sometimes I prefer what might be called inefficiency as a wise use of time. And so I suggest what we used to call "going outside" as a fruitful activity for the new year. When we were children, we were sent out after breakfast with the charge, "Out you go, now, and don't come in until lunch time."

This "staying outside" involved nothing more complicated than simple tools, an axe, a bicycle, plus some basketballs, baseballs, bats and fishing rods. We were bored sometimes, or said we were. We figured out how to play fast-pitch baseball with a whiffle-ball covered with tape. We played football. We made forts. We tried to catch rabbits with our bare hands during the winter when we could track them to their "forms" in the snow. In the summer we took our bikes to the Onion River and competed to see who could catch the most tiny bullheads, which we unceremoniously threw over our shoulders for raccoons' supper.

Staying outside might also have meant watching the chickens and pigeons. We learned about mating – "Oh, look, that one is roosting on the other one!" We watched mice sneak out into the coop and get eaten, whole, by chickens. (Furry eggs were a nightmare.) We felt sympathy for the pigeon thrown



out of its nest, and once my brother raised one by feeding it chewed up crackers from his mouth. But mostly, we sat on upturned buckets and watched.

As a retired-but-not-yet-completely-decrepit man of 62 years, I now find that watching our cows eat is a very good way to use time. Neither spending it nor saving it. Especially towards dusk in the winter, the three cows come into the little shed and I fork hay out for them. They start slowly, and then get into a regular routine, crunching (who knew hay would crunch?), swallowing, belching sweet belches and vile farts. From time to time I scratch Cow's forehead, or go outside to hand-feed Patty. On a good day the bull, McMeyer, lets me run my fingers through his Scottish Highlander bangs.

But mostly I sit on my chair and watch. I

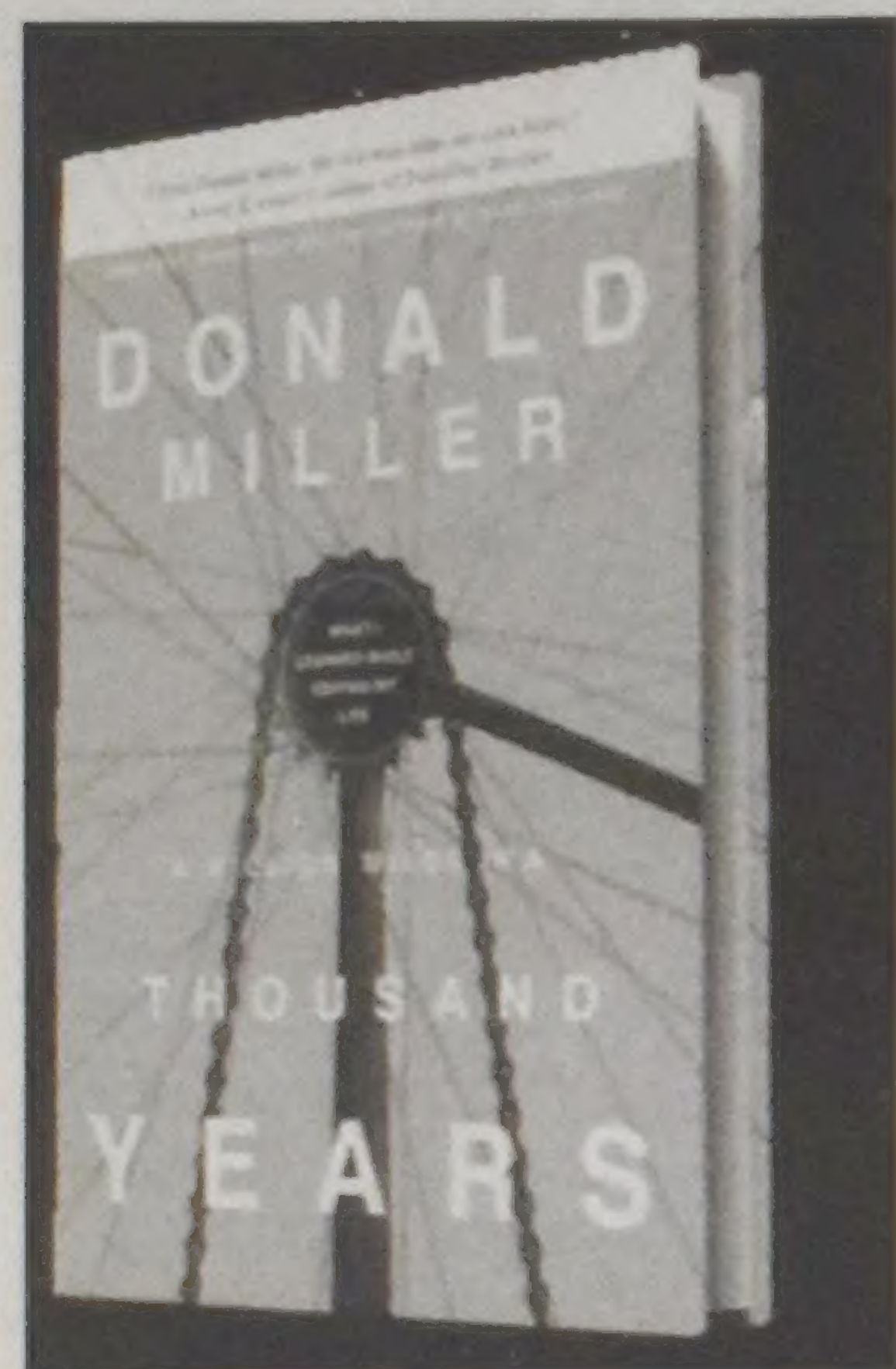
Curt and Betsy Gesch (curtgesch@hotmail.com) live in Telkwa, BC.

do learn some things but mostly I practice a meditative posture: feet up, coffee at the right hand, the occasional "it's all right" to the cows.

People say, "You have too much time on your hands." For those who think snowmobiling or DVD-watching or more work is a better use of time I say this: You may save time and you may spend time; I prefer to savour it.



Reviews



Miller edits himself

Review by Cathy Smith

A Million Miles in a Thousand Years

by Donald Miller

Nashville, Tennessee. Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2009

Initially I was disappointed in Donald Miller's new book, *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years*. His first successful book, *Blue Like Jazz* (2003), a New York Times bestseller, was delightfully honest and funny. His follow-up book, *Searching For God Knows What* (2004) was similarly honest, humorous and literate. In comparison, *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years* struck me as dumbed-down. Simpler prose, fewer literary references, a quieter wit.

It's a good thing I read the book twice, because my first impression wasn't really fair. In his characteristic no-holds-barred way, Miller applies the elements of story as a rubric to test the credibility of his faith. A film producer has made him an offer. He wants to make a movie about Donald's life. Says Miller, "I was going to tell him I needed a couple of weeks to consider the idea, but then he said how much he'd pay me, so I told him I'd do it." In working with the filmmakers, Donald discovers that his life is boring. He learns that character transformation is the point of a story, but also the point of life itself. He concludes that his own life's story has stalled along the way. Despite renown as an author, he is forced to confront "the absent glory of a life that could have been."

Donald attends the funeral of his uncle and begins to unravel what's missing. His uncle, who had devoted his life to helping young men in trouble, had lived a life beyond himself: "his life was like the roots of a tree that went miles around its trunk and came up in my cousins, in their faces and their voices and their character. I didn't think you could kill a tree that big."

Spurred by the movie project, Donald undertakes some "inciting incidents" in his own life to notch up his own story. Conquering his deep-seated reluctance and dread, he re-connects with the father who abandoned him. He hikes the physically-challenging pilgrimage route up Maachu Pichu in Peru and reflects on how pain develops character. The many Incas who gave their lives to build the city infused it with an even greater grandeur than it would have had without such tremendous sacrifice: "The pain made the city more beautiful. The story made us different characters than if we'd showed up at the ending a different way. It made me think about the hard lives so many people have had, the sacrifices they'd endured, and how those people will see heaven differently from those of us who have had easier lives."

Eventually, with 15 other individuals, Donald takes on a 3000 mile cross-country bike marathon in support of fresh water wells for Africa. This, too, becomes another chapter in plotting a more intentional and better story for himself. He falls in love and experiences a heart-wrenching breakup. He walks beside a friend who loses his wife to cancer. At the conclusion of his "story," Donald inaugurates an ambitious urban outreach program for fatherless children called The Mentoring Project.

Miller's candour won me over once again. Targeting his postmodern peers, Miller's *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years* embeds a solid Christian perspective ever-so-casually into a non-doctrinaire conversation. But his conclusions speak to me, too, the not-so-modern baby boomer. "If I have a hope," he writes, "it's that God sat over the dark nothing and wrote you and me, specifically, into the story, and put us in with the sunset and the rainstorm as if to say, *Enjoy*

Bestselling *Blue Like Jazz* author on tour to promote new book.

your place in my story. The beauty of it means you matter, and you can create within it even as I have created you." That doesn't sound so different, after all, from one of my favourite T.S.Eliot quotes: "The Lord who created must wish us to create / And employ our creation again in his service / Which is already his service in creating" (Choruses from 'the Rock').



Cathy Smith lives in Wyoming, ON and is Features Editor for CC.

Taking the struggle out of prayer

Reviewed by Mario Toneguzzi

Seeking God's Face: Praying with the Bible Through the Year

by Philip F. Reinders

Baker Books, Faith Alive Christian Resources, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship 2010

For many people, prayer is not the easiest thing to do.

People of faith often struggle with prayer, and even clergy do as well.

Pastor Phil Reinders of River Park Church, a Christian Reformed church in the Marda Loop area, recently published a book on daily prayer that is modelled after the ancient Christian practice of praying the daily office – a practice that is becoming new to many people these days.



Pastor Reinders inspiring cyclists on the Sea-to-Sea tour.

"I think the real genesis of the project, the whole book, is the poverty of my own prayer life. I think really I wrote the book for myself to help me. Prayer probably had to be one of the biggest struggles of my relationship with God," says Reinders.

The daily office is simply a form of prayer – a structure people pray with. It's an invitation to a conversation with God. Some space for silence to listen is included. A

Psalm is read. There is a passage of scripture. In the book, Reinders has prepared a place for free prayer. Set prayer is also said and there is a closing blessing.

"A lot of people assume that the best or the most genuine type of prayer is sort of the spontaneous riff. Something that flows freely. At its rawest, most natural, it is. But I found, along with many others, that sort of praying can't sustain me in the long term. I need some structure or some pattern. That's what the daily office is. It's got a long history," says Reinders.

The key is to carve out a specific time in a day. Cease whatever you are doing and re-orient your life around God.

Reinders' book is called *Seeking God's Face: Praying with the Bible Through the Year*.

"Ever since the disciples asked Jesus, 'Lord, teach us to pray,' followers of Christ have sought out guides to a richer prayer life. If you're at all like me, learning about and living a life of prayer can be a steep challenge. Who hasn't struggled with it? And like the disciples, I've wanted a guide to lead me into a richer life of prayer," he says.

"Seeking God's Face provides a way of praying new to many of us, but is rooted in an ancient practice of prayer that has sustained the prayer life of Christians for thousands of years. Modelled after the Christian practice of praying the daily office, Seeking God's Face provides a simple daily pattern for prayer.

"So why might this ancient practice be a helpful practice to reclaim? While God is omnipresent, we are not. We so often take a theological truth – such as God is present everywhere, at all times – and construct a flawed practice around it. Therefore, I can pray whenever I feel like it. God is everywhere and always available to us. We are not. And so we find specific places and times to pray. The goal is to make us awake to God in all our waking moments."

Reinders says living as a follower of Jesus involves a new way of thinking and believing, yet so much more than adopting a set of beliefs. Christian beliefs open up a whole new world, the kingdom of God. It's a way of life that shapes our living.

Reprinted with permission from the Calgary Herald (October 30, 2010).
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Features

Editor's Note: Ver Merris and van Hoek collaborated extensively with Calvin Seminary and the CRC Pastor-Church Relations Office to consult with pastors and produce this 2007 report. The conclusions of these psychologists are based upon twenty years of intensive work with scores of churches and pastors who have experienced major conflict. *Christian Courier* is grateful to Calvin Seminary and Dr. Duane Kelderman, Associate Professor of Preaching, for permission to print this report.

How pastors struggle



Stepping forward in faith, dragging baggage behind?

Over the past several years we have evaluated many dozens of pastors. Most came to us because of struggles in their ministry. A few sought help with future direction or simply for better self-understanding.

That pastors would seek help at all is remarkable. Ministry is a lonely profession. Pastors are expected to live exemplary lives and serve as role models for their congregations. Consequently, pastors can be reluctant to admit shortcomings or vulnerabilities, and they are sometimes surprised by congregational dissatisfaction and criticism, or by their own failures. Unfortunately, the pressure to strive for perfection leaves ministers even more vulnerable to personal struggles. They can be reluctant to ask for help even though they face ordinary issues, temptations and troubles.

We have observed several tendencies in the clergy who have consulted us, and we think it might be helpful to share our results with church leaders and others whose task is to assist pastors in working through their challenges. The tendency that characterizes most of the pastors we have seen is *defensiveness*. Ministers are understandably reluctant to admit shortcomings on the psychological tests we use. Instead, pastors view themselves as highly principled, moral and virtuous. Test instruments are quite good at detecting this defensiveness, and the pastors we have counseled often have been reluctant to admit even minor flaws or emotional discomfort – even to the point of threatening the validity of the test results. Rather than be surprised (or unduly troubled) by pastors' strong tendency to be defensive, those who are in a position to help must simply acknowledge the strong pressure pastors feel to make a polished presentation of themselves in spite of their obvious and genuine struggles.

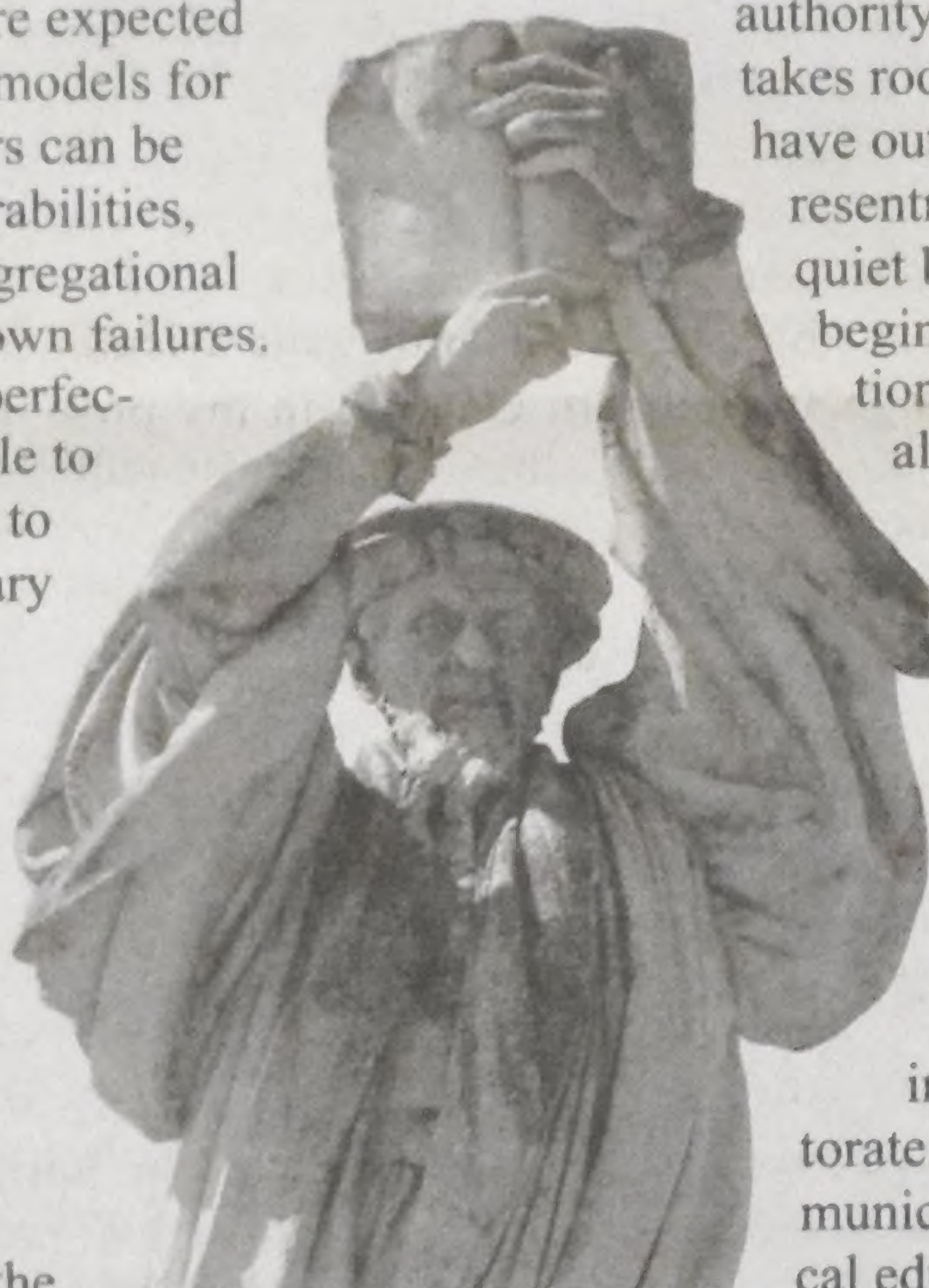
Beyond this overall pattern of defensiveness, pastors who have struggles in their ministries tend to fall into one of three categories. The first is a group that is too self-assured; the second a group that suffers from social discomfort or aloofness; and the third, a group that wrestles with lack of organization.

Leadership style

The first group of pastors who struggle is the "too self-assured." Whether because of the stamp of "God's calling" or because of a tendency toward arrogance or even as a reaction to earlier failure, this group tends to emphasize their "specialness" in the ministry. These

pastors view themselves as visionary leaders and expect others to fall in place behind them. They can have rather significant needs for admiration and approval, but can be perceived as arrogant, dramatic, or impetuous by those around them (who might be reluctant to point this out). They have an overvalued view of self, a need to be superior or perfect, and sometimes a "slippery" ethical system that arises from the need to hide flaws and keep defects secret. These pastors also tend to focus on pleasing the congregational authorities and may be dismissive of congregants who need their care but have little to offer by way of conferring power or prestige.

These clergy have difficulty reflecting on their own contribution to their troubles. They tend to blame others, especially other congregational leaders or a few meddlesome parishioners whom they view as the cause of their distress. They often feel miffed, slighted, or unfairly criticized but have no ready mechanism for dealing with these feelings. They bristle even at constructive criticism. Thus, a subtle but growing resentment of lay authority and congregational leadership takes root. Because many pastors do not have outlets for easy resolution of anger or resentment, these pastors can suffer with quiet bitterness and dissatisfaction and begin to retreat from their congregations. This is a very difficult pattern to alter and often requires professional intervention.



Calvin delivers.

Relational issues

A second group of ministers who have difficulty is the "socially uncomfortable" or "aloof." Many people are drawn toward ministry because of an interest in theology, without considering the interpersonal demands of the pastorate. Seminaries have historically communicated a similar bias with a theological education that emphasizes academics over interpersonal skills and emotional

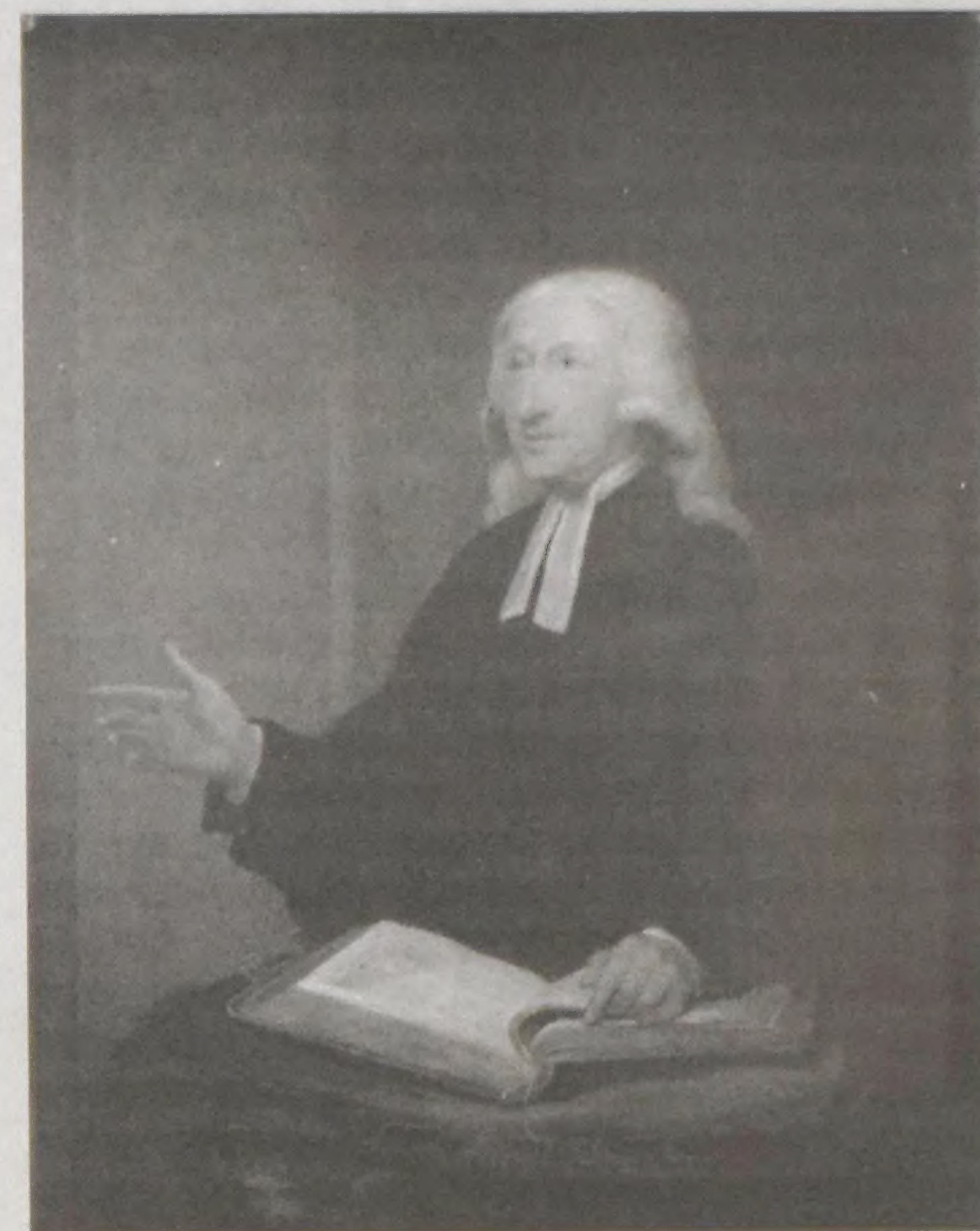
intelligence. Consequently, many young pastors who were excellent seminary students struggle when they are faced with the intense relational demands of ministry.

Probably no skill is more important to a pastor than the interpersonal grace and comfort that comes with emotional intelligence, and those who appear to be eccentric, aloof, or uncomfortably shy will have difficulty. Conflicts about other issues are often evidence of congregational dissatisfaction with their pastor's lack of empathy, or are reactions to interpersonal slights committed by the pastor who lacks awareness of how others perceive him or her.

Organizational factors

A third group of ministers who struggle is the "disorganized." We sometimes informally think of this pattern as a form of "attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder." These pastors are scattered, late, unreliable and possibly impulsive. They miss deadlines and fail to accomplish tasks like making visits or meeting council expectations.

The administrative demands of the pastorate are sufficiently challenging so that pastors who are not very well organized tend to alienate congregation members. Church leaders expect pastors to be reasonably responsible, organized and responsive. Ministers who routinely disappoint



John Wesley's serene expression belies his wild ministry. (painting by William Hamilton)

them will face a rising tide of resentment.

The struggle for church leaders, of course, comes with trying to assist pastors with these challenges. For the overly self-assured it can be helpful, especially early in their careers, for seasoned colleagues, parishioners and mentors to gently point out the ways in which they might be perceived as arrogant, heavy-handed or insensitive. Pastors in this camp sometimes need to develop humility and something more of a "pastor's heart." This can be fostered by consultation with mature friends and peers or by professional mental health assistance.

The socially uncomfortable or aloof pastor may find that interpersonal discomfort will diminish over time. Education, consultation, mentoring and sheer practice can help pastors improve social skills, learn to listen attentively and reach out to others with improved levels of comfort and effectiveness. Professional counseling helps some pastors with these issues, too.

The disorganized or impulsive pastor may also benefit from professional help. This pattern sometimes reflects underlying disturbances that can respond to medication or personal counseling. It's a very difficult pattern to change, but a combination of clear expectations, better planning and scheduling and focusing on organizing techniques can be helpful. Churches can help by providing adequate administrative support.

The pastors we talk with routinely tell us how naïve they were about the demands of ministry. Successful pastors accept criticism with grace, have a realistic notion of their own worth, value positive interpersonal relationships and reliably meet their responsibilities. We hope that these thoughts will make it a little easier for some pastors to grow in these areas and for congregational leaders to help their pastors.

Dane Ver Merris, Ed.D.

Bert van Hoek, Ed.D.

Clergy Evaluation & Consultation Service

Comment

Welcome to the "Comment" page, where readers can offer their reflections on a variety of topics in greater length than on the Letters page, and not always in response to a previous CC article. *Christian Courier* does not necessarily share the opinion of these writers and we have the right to edit for length or decline for suitability.

Send your comments to cathy@christiancourier.ca.



John Tamming

If we wonder why more talented and energetic kids are not attracted to the ministry, maybe part of the problem lies with pastors themselves. Ask yourself how many articles you have read lamenting the hard life of a pastor and the overwhelming need for pastoral support. Then ask yourself how many times you have heard a pastor say with a big grin that he has the best job in the world. For a profession which is mandated to excite us about our Christian vocation, this is odd.

In my practice, I interact regularly with all sorts of people: health care workers, law clerks, accountants and labourers pounding out the night shifts. I rarely hear from them what I have heard so consistently from pastors over the years (from three years at seminary, from the pulpit, from conversations over coffee and from the pages of *CC* and *The Banner*) – that their job is so hard and difficult that we ought to appreciate the burdens they bear, the sacrifices they make. I have seen pastors come to council with their day-timers in hand, eager to impress with the hours they put in. I have seen pastors accept with long, suffering faces the consolations offered at church coffee for how hard they work, with the requisite "I don't know how you do it" and the doleful eyes grateful for this commiseration.

What ambitious, bright young woman or man would possibly be attracted to this profession? Is the task of those assigned to walk with beautiful feet difficult? Of course, there are still some very hard congregations out there and one has empathy for the pastor who struggles with true clinical depression. But is the task oppressively difficult in most cases? Hardly.

Changing face of ministry

I recently read the delightful memoirs of Rev. Breedveld, who served in my hometown of Strathroy, Ontario, many decades ago. We have travelled far since those days. Pastors are no longer expected to move every several years; they are able to form longer and more meaningful relationships in their communities as a result. Pastors are no longer kept as ecclesial pets; much of the glass house is gone as their kids are allowed to carouse with the best of them and few gossip if the spouse works at the hospital. Pastors are no longer worked into an early grave; congregations are far more sensitive

Reality check for pastors

to workloads, often there is a monthly Sunday off, sabbaticals have become common and the long, slow death of the second service has punted away much of the sermon grind. Yet you would not know any of this if you listened to pastors and read church periodicals.

Surely it is time for an attitudinal shift. May I suggest that it would help if pastors conveyed the following to themselves, to their consistories and, perhaps most important, to the sophomore kicking around career options: *I love my job. I went into it because I love Christ, I love people and I love words. I love to talk; I love to read; I love to write. I get paid to read books for a living. I get paid to explore every facet of life and to let my discoveries rip every Sunday at 10. I get to attend conferences regularly and hang out with and learn from intelligent people. Yes there are some fixed commitments, but much of my time is as structured as I want it to be – and how good is that? The money isn't great but it's a little better than I would be making as a college professor; besides, I knew the number when I signed up for this career. I get to promote the enchantment of this world, to help people navigate the mysteries of death and - even in my 60s - I get to entertain truckloads of young people on the back deck. This is a job that keeps giving.*

Antidote for ministerial blues

We assume that the solution for frustrated and burned out pastors consists of support groups. I suspect that the last thing the average pastor needs is even more introspection, though the pastor who is intent on going that route will find a veritable support industry out there, with funded trips to the mountains of Colorado or retreats paid for by the Pew Foundation. I think renewed energy, focus and mission can be derived elsewhere. I have long marvelled that, for some reason, many pastors seem to think they are not required to jump in on the countless volunteer work that makes our communities run. Join a local municipal board, sign up for a hospital committee, coach indoor soccer, help out with the local fair, or help run a local film studies course. Surely this is as interesting (and with greater personal and homiletical payback) as keeping some faded local ministerial together or waiting to serve on a denominational board in Grand Rapids. More importantly, surely this is as effective an antidote to the ministerial blues.

I am blessed with family and friends throughout Southern Ontario. In my professional capacity I have also dealt with troubled pastoral situations. In short, I try to keep my ear to the ground. The number of pastors who present as mild depressives or as hard done by astounds. I sense some push back, however. I sense that more and



Portrait of a Preacher by Dutch painter, Frans Hals.

more parishioners have had it with the self-centered whining of some of our clergy. If a few years go by and you are not having any fun, for the love of the church, forget about the vested pension, forget about the fear of the unknown, stop holding a church back and negotiate a robust severance. Christ needs better.

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Living Sermons and Walking Prayers

An edited excerpt from a CRC-Voices online discussion.

Cathy Smith

Some participants were critical of a perceived trend in churches today where pastors are expected to function as executive directors to the detriment of their spiritual calling. Others felt that today's pastors are succumbing to worldly career aspirations.

I disagree with those of you who claim that we are abandoning reformational principles by having a paid professional in the pulpit. On the contrary, I think we are embracing the Reformation. The pastor is not my priest. I can pray, read my Bible, and receive forgiveness without the pastor. You, the pastor, have a role to play within the church family as spiritual leader, and thankfully you are equipped by education and ordination, but as a person you are not necessarily more holy than the council chair or the custodian. That's stating it rather baldly, but correctly, I think. So when you have a mystical moment in which you think we should cancel the second service forever, starting next week, we don't have to accept that as gospel.

Loving the pastor

My desire to have the pastor be a paid professional originates in a reformational love and respect for him or her as an equal, a fellow-servant in God's kingdom. You, pastor, are not being paid by the Pope anymore, and you deserve financial stability. Your family deserves some of your time, too, so let's structure your employment to give you days off and vacation time. The costly preparation for your vocation warrants appropriate remuneration. We're happy to give you a salary and contribute to a pension plan, but that, of course, comes with certain obligations.

I have no problem with my pastor being a visionary or having promptings of the Spirit. But that vision is best received when there is evidence of sensitivity towards the church family. The pastor doesn't have to be a "yes-man or yes-woman," and simply give the congregation what it wants to hear, but there has to be some willingness to accept direction from council. The pastor who can function within business-like parameters is not an errand boy or girl, but a wise leader.

The loving pastor

The office of Minister of the Word should be respected by church members. But the better spiritual authority, the qualitative kind, comes in the offering of loving deeds to the congregation. The pastor who changes the vacuum cleaner bag, does dishes, or helps the bulletin editor fix a paper jam in the photocopier, is the pastor who is a living sermon and a walking prayer. The congregation might not see those private prayers in your office. In fact, if it's a choice between praying for VBS in the office, or being involved in VBS more visibly, I'd encourage you to get out there and be that walking prayer!

Yes, the pastor does have greater spiritual authority than the person in the pew (conferred in ordination, relating to the office), gains additional practical authority through giftedness, training, education and experience (much like a nurse would have more authority in a medical crisis than a mechanic), and then, in that mysterious moving of the Spirit, sometimes earns the deepest and best authority when the congregation recognizes and affirms his or her loving servanthood on their behalf.

Features

‘Another year of service, of witness for Thy love...’

Work and rest: historical distinctions

Bert den Boggende

Scripture starts and ends on a positive note about work: Adam and Eve took care of paradise and named the animals, while Revelation's redeemed servants have work to do on the new earth. Some may object that Hebrews 4 states that God's people will enter his rest. However, when God rested at the end of creating the universe, he continued to maintain that universe. A negative perspective entered with the fall's painful toil, yet somehow work is in our DNA. Over time, several distinct views on work have been voiced.

The ancient world

In Egypt, the Middle Kingdom's *Satire of the Trades* announced the first distinction, a comparison of 18 trades to the scribal profession: "each is more wretched than the other" and "there is nothing better than books!" The Greeks and Romans continued this distinction between physical and mental labour. Although, out of necessity, all Greek males worked the fields, they regarded philosophizing as more honourable, as Paul's Athenian experience testifies. Gradually the wealthy associated manual labour with slaves, sharpening the distinction between the work of the hands and work of the mind. Manual workers, according to Plato's *Republic*, were to obey their superiors. The first century Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus, who championed undisturbed inner peace, suggested striving towards a life filled with spiritual and physical enjoyments and no work. According to Cicero's *On Duty*, the professions were gentlemanly occupations, while the trades were vulgar, retail business was contemptible, since the dealer could not succeed unless he was dishonest and the unskilled labourer's manual work was base, for his wages were a badge of slavery. Cicero also gives us a glimpse of Roman capitalism: "As for property, it is a duty to make money."

Dualisms

With the rise of asceticism, Christianity also began to make a different distinction about work: the labour of monks and nuns was regarded as spiritual and the rest was on a lower plane. This hierarchy prevailed until Luther argued that such dualism was unbiblical: work was honorable. Nevertheless, he himself had difficulties with some forms of work, notably with commerce.

Calvin, following in Luther's footsteps, was more receptive to commerce. A century ago Max Weber argued in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* that Calvin's positive perspective contributed to capitalism. Without going into the book's analytical flaws, it may be noted that Calvin believed God had endowed wealth to some people in trust to care for the neighbour, a means to fulfill Jesus' summary of the law.

Throughout the centuries a distinction was also made between male and female



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Christ in the Carpenter's Shop*, also known as *Christ in the House of his Parents*, 1850, Tate Gallery. Characters include John the Baptist (to the right), Mary's mother Anna (back center) and Joseph's assistant (left). The shop may have been based on one in Oxford Street, London.

work. The distinction became sharply focused in the educational theories discussed between 1850 and 1950. Although many women worked outside the home or did industrial work inside the home, the 19th century ideal was that a woman should marry and stay home, implying that females did not need much education. Three problems militated against this inference. Daughters of well-to-do families were expected to be good home managers and thus needed at least some education; some women never married and needed education in order to provide for themselves, and girls needed to work before they married. Consequently, female education had a double aim: for skilled work and for motherhood. With the rise of 19th century feminism came two different demands: one demanding that females should be educated equally with males, implying co-education; the other calling for equivalence – education specifically geared to females – implying separate education. Calvinists were against co-education beyond grade school, while Pius XI's encyclical of 1929 (*Divini illius magistri*) forbade all co-education for Catholics. Before World War II, Calvinists and Catholics opposed women working outside the home and did not favour well-educated women. While men argued that work at home was honorable, in practice they usually treated such work as inferior. Since women were also regarded as mentally inferior, their earnings were normally much lower, a discrimination still common today.

Modern era

Is work a vice or a virtue? If, as I have suggested, work is in our DNA, it is a virtue. But, because of the fall, it can also become a vice. The Calvinist work ethic made work a virtue, but over time it became a virtue in itself, independent of its purpose which was to glorify God. Gradually Calvin's perspective was completely lost with serious consequences becoming apparent during the Industrial Revolution when, especially in England, enormous abuses occurred. A new kind of poverty emerged: pauperism. These

new paupers and the working poor became antagonistic to the new bourgeoisie, many of them Christians.

Unquestionably Karl Marx was the most severe critic of capitalism and work, but there were other early critics. For instance, the French priest-philosopher De Lamennais stated that "the deep degradation, the loathsome oppression, of the indigent class is a natural and inevitable effect of the materialism that rules in our society." But he was ahead of his time. The majority of educated French Catholics were either indifferent or reactionary to the plight of the workers, considering poverty as the necessary lot of the larger part of mankind. Poverty, they argued, was by no means an evil, and served as a basis for authority, increased courage, demonstrated merit, and was useful and advantageous to government. In Protestant England Herbert Spencer, whose Social Darwinism had its greatest success in the USA, posited that public aid to the needy tended to perpetuate poverty. His separation of work and social justice is characteristic of 19th century liberalism, but also characteristic of conservative economics today. This attitude was also quite common among Christians such as the Reveil-influenced Rev. O. G. Heldring, who, while providing assistance to the poor, rejected philanthropy as a wrong principle.

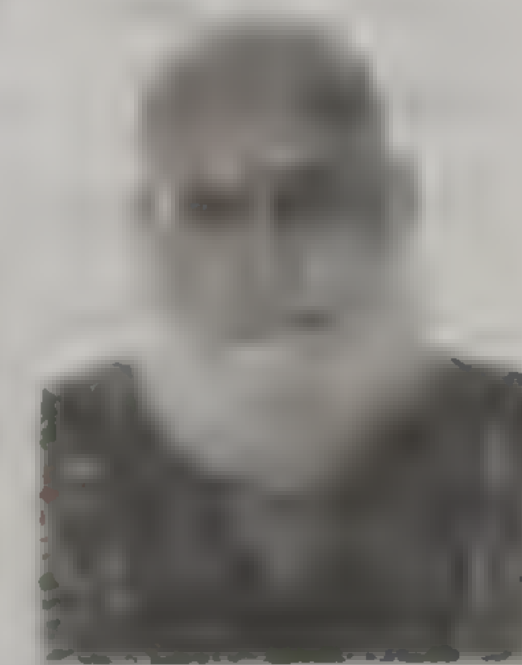
Many French Catholics proclaimed socialism as the corollary of the gospel and Jesus as the father of socialism. The bishop of Mainz, Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, a friend of De Lamennais, wrote in *The Labour Question and Christianity* (1864) that under laissez-faire capitalism working conditions were intolerable and that workers were being reduced to wage slavery. His views influenced Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum novarum* which condemned the abuses in a manner similar to Abraham Kuyper's speech before the first Christian social congress of the same year. In North America, the Social Gospellers spoke out against the abuses. In general, Christians were late in speaking out against the abuses.

Beyond 'working for a living'

By 1900, most critics wanted to modify capitalism or, like Marx, abolish it. Even the non-Marxist 20th century historian Isaiah Berlin called "for the total overthrow of the entire abominable world of calculation, profit and loss, the treatment of human beings and their powers as commodities, as material for bureaucratic manipulation." In 1932 the philosopher Bertrand Russell posited in *In Praise of Idleness* that "there is far too much work done in the world." He therefore suggested that people should not work more than four hours, which was enough time to maintain oneself and to produce all that was necessary. Then all people, not just the wealthy, would have leisure time for enjoyment and simple happiness, to which people had attached too little importance. The wealthy, however, argued that the adults would turn to drink and the children to mischief if the workers should have much leisure time. Yet, the hard work of labourers kept these wealthy in comfortable idleness, "the historical source of the gospel of work." The labours of the many made it possible for the few to have the time and leisure essential for civilization. One may disagree with Russell's interpretations, but at least he saw beyond the idea of work as merely the means of maintaining life and he saw beyond the general economists' observation that work is done in order to produce goods and services and inevitably leads to increased production simply to maintain the system itself. Russell seems to be closer to the notion of "biblical rest" than he perhaps imagined or many of us think.

In his 2005 essay *Working at Rest*, Calvin College philosopher James Smith asked the pertinent question: "What if we are not created for output, but rest?" Historical distinctions about work created hierarchies of supposedly superior and inferior people. Those unbiblical dualisms have often prevented us from grasping the purpose of work, which is not only to satisfy our basic needs, but above all to glorify God. That old Latin phrase *ora et labora* (pray and work), which I heard so often as a teenager, shows the right connection and the right order. Perhaps all our busyness and hard work prevents us from working hard at entering God's rest.

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Features

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

I have been told that I'm hard to impress. If one can say such a thing about oneself, I'd agree. Kindly, my observers didn't say that the cause of that characteristic may be curmudgeonliness. Or that I'm just too, too picky for my own good – and theirs.

My father's side of the family exhibits that trait. While it can result in being virtually alone in expressing certain opinions, I hope I'm not deluded in believing that it isn't an entirely negative quality. My dad taught his five children to think critically, both in regards to philosophies and goings-on in the secular world and in faith-related matters – including potent biblical-theological critiques of the sermons we heard twice a Sunday, week after week, from a minister who was in our church from my fourth birthday until I was 20.



Still Doubting (1990) by John Granville Gregory reworks Caravaggio's famous Doubting Thomas (1602) with contemporary figures.

Now one might surmise that critical thinking and skepticism are natural partners. And sometimes they are. But for my dad, his numerous siblings and their own father, such skepticism never expressed itself as doubts about God. Nor has it for me.

Having lived through the '60s when it first (first in my lifetime, anyway) became fashionable to question all the "Establishment" did, said or thought, I sometimes wondered whether my lack of doubt regarding God, his Word, his faithful promises and actions as revealed in Scripture was, well, kosher. Shouldn't every intelligent, educated Christian go through periods of serious doubt about the faith he or she was taught at home, Sunday school, church and Christian school? Why then, even in my darkest hours, was I not truly doubting? Was I just naïve? Did I lack imagination?

Doubt full-grown bears apostasy

I asked myself such questions over the years, usually after I'd read a heartfelt article in *The Banner*, CC or another Christian publication whose author agonized over tragedy in his or her life, asking whether God is really there, or if he is, whether he is really a good and loving God. I don't want to minimize real spiritual wrestling. Doubting whether God is to be trusted or if there is meaning in life at all must be terrifying. It is then that the distressed need to be assured of the support and fervent prayers

'The conviction of things not seen'

of their fellow Christians on their behalf.

Yet for some Christians I've encountered personally and whose stories or books I've read, Doubt, capital D, seems to be a badge of honour, part of young Christians' rites of passage into adulthood and de rigueur even for older, worldly-wise Christians in our skeptical, secular era. That I didn't buy, and I still don't.

In considering doubt, Scripture should be our guide (as always). I asked myself: Are there examples of Bible personages for whom doubt was a routine, even beneficial part of faith?

I didn't find any. Of course the Old Testament Israelites constantly jilted God and went off after "divine" lovers of their own making. Then, between generations of shunning God, they'd repent for a while, having been subject to God's hard discipline to bring them back to him. (Yet God never abandoned them.) Their dire unbelief always began with doubts and complaints about God's faithfulness and manner of acting, and the final result was not pretty.

There's nothing in Scripture to indicate that Doubt in itself is a positive thing, no matter how dark the circumstances with which God may test us. Doubt full-grown bears apostasy, a slap at the gracious face of the God who is Lord and Creator of the Universe and who simultaneously yearns to be our most intimate friend and Redeemer.

At breakfast this morning I read Psalm 91. Its assurances uncannily speak to my topic. (Funny how God has a way of leading us like that!) He profoundly understands our best of times and worst of times, and invites us to wholeheartedly believe that

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
Will rest in the shadow of the Almighty....
Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday....
"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
He will call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honour him....*

Marian Van Til (mvantil@roadrunner.com) is a former CC editor living in Youngstown, NY.



Artful Eye



Besides going everywhere with cameras in tow, Murray and Deborah DeBoer are actively involved in their church and busy raising their four, soon to be seven, children. The DeBoers are adopting three girls from the Philippines.



YES

Yes was the best answer to every question.

- Frank McCourt, *Teacher Man*

So I said yes to everything, yes to the green hills rolling out ahead, yes to the hayfield tied up in rolls, yes to the clouds blooming like peonies in the sky's blue meadow, the long tongue of the road lolling out before me, yes to the life of travel, yes to the other life at home, yes to the daisies freckling the ditch, to the sun pouring down on everything like Vermeer's milkmaid and her endless jug of milk, yes to the winds that pulled the clouds apart like taffy, then turned them into a classroom of waving hands punched into fists: yes yes yes.

Barbara Crooker



Barbara Crooker is a Christian and established poet and author who lives in Fogelsville, Pennsylvania. This poem is reprinted with permission from her new book, *More* (C&R Press, 2010). You can read more about Barbara Crooker on her website at barbaracrooker.com.

MORE



Photos taken in Sarnia, Ontario.

LAVENDER RISE PHOTOGRAPHY C.M.D. DE BOER

Columns

EVERYDAY CHRISTIAN

Cathy Smith 17

Preaching to those who came for refreshments

Not long ago it was my turn to preach at Meadowview Nursing Home in Petrolia, a nearby town. I spoke on prayer. Of course, I'm under no obligation to exegete a passage or follow any "sermon" rules. I just do my own thing. Members from our church play instruments and sing. It's expected that we stay after the service and socialize with the residents.

I used to give talks at the nursing home way back in the early '80s when it was called Twilight Haven. (The name change is clearly an improvement.) I even have some of those old meditations in my files — on discipleship, on communion of the saints. My brother Rick, of prodigious memory, likes to tell the story of my very first sermon, in which I referenced the pet rock phenomenon: Jesus as our P.E.T. Rock — the Purifier (of our faith), Extinguisher (of our sins) and Transformer (of our lives). I think I borrowed that illustration from somewhere. Strikes me as a little silly and dated now, so I'm disavowing it. Apparently, as I prayed for the peace initiatives of President Carter, one of the senior citizens who was paying attention began a loud conversation with her neighbour: "I like that Jimmy Carter! I think he is doing a good job as President! Don't you?" Helpless, I plowed my prayer right through her analysis. My discomfiture had us in stitches later. Rick says we couldn't stop laughing. I actually don't remember any of this.

Last year I gave my first talk after a 30 year hiatus from this ministry. On the pulpit was a taped notice politely requesting that the entire service be no longer than 40 minutes. Many of the residents are seated in the chapel up to 15 minutes early, so an overly long service can be burdensome. When we had concluded our worship, 30



Cathy and her mom singing at Meadowview Nursing Home.

minutes in total, a woman I didn't know came up to me and said, "That was a refreshing change." She proceeded to grumble about guest pastors who ignore the notice. I'd worked hard on my Pentecost message and received a few other positive comments from the residents and guests. So I was feeling pretty good about my renewed involvement.

Feed my sheep

During coffee time, I had a lovely conversation with a 90-year-old woman who asked me three times where I was from. She would have a bite of cookie, ruminate, and then turn to me and inquire spritely: "And where are you from, dear?" Three times I answered "Wyoming." I

was starting to feel rather like Peter! Each time she followed up by inquiring whether I knew the Stonehouse family from Wyoming. Alas, I did not. I began to realize that maybe she was suffering from dementia. But then she abruptly changed the topic and announced quite matter-of-factly that she was ready to be called home. She said she knew the gospel. She'd been brought up Baptist. She had grown up on a farm, fed chickens, and was the youngest of seven kids. She had two sons who both lived far away and never visited. It was a poignant moment, a brief glimpse in the window at her life. The fullness. The emptiness. Again, I thought of Peter, commanded by the Lord to "feed my sheep." This dear elderly lamb of God still hungered to hear his Word and be comforted as she awaited her call to glory. Or maybe she just hungered for a visit. She would probably forget our conversation within minutes. It didn't matter. We, the forgetful, are never forgotten by God. Once again, I felt good to be part of this ministry.

Across the table, another perky resident was enjoying her snack, too. She looked directly at me and said, "You know, that was really good." Thinking perhaps she was also referring to the sermon I'd just delivered, I was about to say "Thank you," when she continued, "I just love those homemade chocolate chip cookies. Can I have another?"

Bubbling inside with mirth, I passed her the plate of cookies. It was indeed a good morning. ➤

Cathy Smith (cathysmith001@hotmail.com) is a contributing editor with CC. She lives in Wyoming, Ontario.



Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

Differences do not need to be stumbling blocks

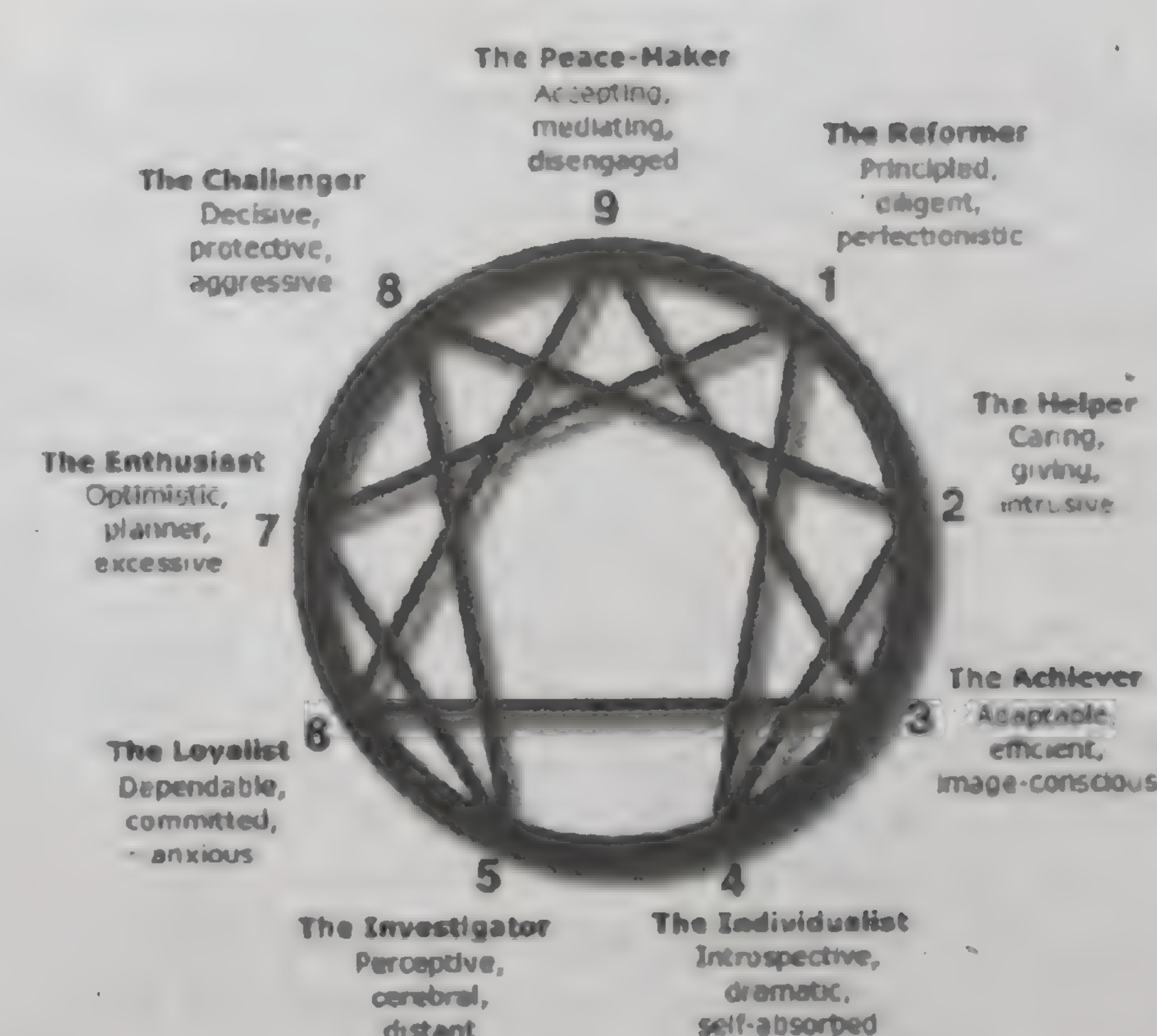
Years ago a book titled *All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten* became a best seller. I chuckled when I reread it the other day. And yet I wonder how much of what we learned in kindergarten we eventually forget — such as knowing instinctively that most of our classmates were somewhat the same but also somewhat different from ourselves. Some differences, of course, are more obvious than others. Yet as we grow older, we often resort to seeing differences as stumbling blocks to good relationships. And while I agree that differences can be inherently painful or at minimum down-right annoying, they can also help us grow in ways not previously realized.

Q: I am 50, married with three adult children. Two are married and one still lives at home. My spouse works full-time and I work part-time, volunteer at the church and keep the family home organized. I have been more or less happily married for 28 years. Still, my spouse and I have a lingering problem that keeps getting worse. From my perspective, we have a major communication problem. Whenever one of us brings up a problem that needs to be addressed and acted upon we often disagree. We disagree on how we see the problem but also how to correct it. While my spouse is easy-going and tends to shrug his shoulders, I prefer to jump into the problem and make immediate changes for the better. Unfortunately, we quickly become angry in our discussions and begin to lose our focus. Before long, we become demeaning and insulting to one another. In the end, a painful silence

hangs in the air for days. Eventually, out of sheer loneliness and despair, we find our way back to each other — until the next time.

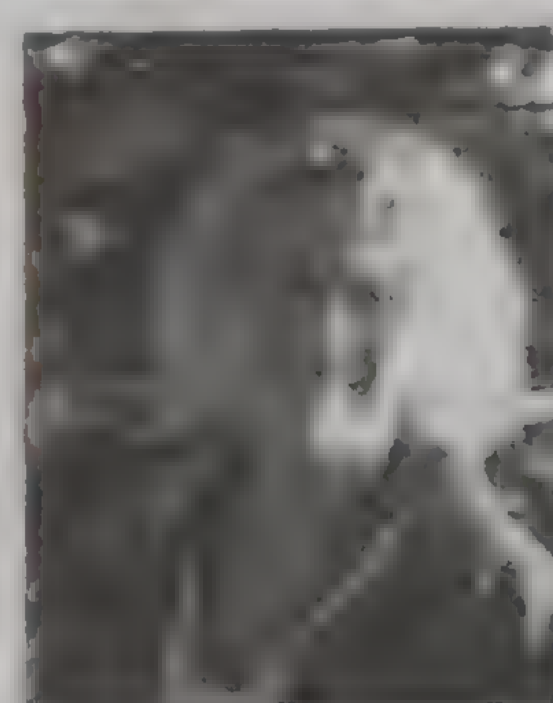
A: The first thing that comes to mind from your story is one question: What keeps the two of you together? Considering the many ups and downs it sounds like you have experienced during your 28 years of marriage, there must be something good that helps you both hang in there. Still, I agree that you have a communication problem. Unfortunately, after battling it out for so long, I also believe you will have some bad habits under your belt. And because this column does not lend itself to outlining detailed communication skills, I suggest you sprint, not saunter, to the nearest therapist or communication class being held in your church or your community. This will open your eyes to different ways of communicating and negotiating with each other.

In the meantime, I would recommend you keep in mind your different approaches to conflict. Consequently, your spouse will need to get off the couch and you may need to temper the need for a fast resolution in order to meet at a place where change can happen. Furthermore, it has been my experience that individuals who had difficulty accepting differences in others benefit from becoming familiar with the Enneagram, which is a model of nine different personality types and widely accepted in many Christian churches. Several people were so attuned to this model it especially helped them in their spiritual development as they began to see the nine personality types as



nine faces of the soul. In other words, when you and your spouse decide to work on yourselves and become aware and reflective about your feelings, thoughts and behaviours in order to have healthier relationships, you will have a deeper respect for others as well as a sense of wonder for the Creator of all. ➤

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.



Columns

Co-owning the Earth Oil: the wonder fuel of energy's history

Bert Hielema

Three hundred and fifty dollars for a barrel of oil? Douglas Coupland starts his book *Player One* with a sudden 400 percent spike in oil prices. Was he unrealistic in doing so? Let me outline the human energy history.

Our earth has no expiry date. The Lord made sure of that when he called it good seven times, and very good when he had finished the final touches. But our precious planet does have a "best before" date. That point was passed a long time ago, coinciding with the eating of the proverbial apple. It's been downhill ever since.

Our earth has no expiry date, but that does not mean that nothing will ever expire. The world economy has always been able to cope with the disappearing of certain vital ingredients. For the longest time wood was the energy of choice: when Jesus fried some fish on the Galilean shore, he used dead branches from nearby trees. Historian J.R. McNeill, in *Something New Under the Sun*, writes that in Jesus' time the world had 200 to 300 million people. Since the earth then was mostly forest, wood – as a renewable source of fuel – was able to do the job. It took 1500 years to double the population to 500 million, and because of certain discoveries, such as potatoes, only 300 years to reach one billion in 1800.

When wood could not do the job anymore, coal replaced it, even though it was so highly polluting that London, England became Smog Town. However, thanks to those pure carbon pieces, the next billion required only 120 years, reaching it in the 1920s when I was born. In my lifetime the number of people inhabiting this world has more than tripled, to seven billion greedy consumers, and this time oil has been the wonder fuel.

Climbing to the peak

Oil has wrought miracles, enabling the marketing of ever more marvellous machines: television is now old-hat; land-line telephone is almost passé; the internet, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are just the latest of the innovative litter.

Oil has also been the trigger for less pleasant plays. Where the 19th century was one of peace and progress, the short 20th one (which started in 1914 and ended in 1991, according to Eric Hobsbawm) saw almost 200 million violent deaths. Access to oil played a crucial role in causing these casualties.

Will our 21st century be even shorter and see even greater misfortune?

Our era totally depends on one vital item: carbon-based energy. The earth has no expiry date, thank God, but oil, gas, and

even uranium and coal are finite substances. All are enemies of God. Enemies of God? Yes, anything that pollutes, or anybody that pollutes is contrary to God's works, which God called "good."

According to the influential International Energy Agency (IEA), based in Paris, peak oil – 30 billion barrels per year – was reached in 2006, now about five years ago. Peak oil refers to the easily obtained crude that originates in the Middle East, the North Sea and Texas, the light stuff that needs little refining, unlike the tar-sand mix that needs extracting, boiling and refining before it can further poison the air,



producing only 1.3 barrel for every barrel of oil spent.

The last time I peeked at the oil price, it was around \$92 and creeping up. Financial gurus are no different from you and me: they see safety in numbers, and typically exhibit herding behaviour. Once the pack decides that peak oil is real, we will see rapid shifts. If even a small percentage of restless money decides to chase after oil, there'll be a rapid and sudden explosion, perhaps jumping to \$200 per barrel overnight, just as happened in the fictional *Player One*.

It has been estimated that a four percent rise in economic growth increases oil use by one percent, a four to one relationship. This also means that when oil production drops, we would see about a four percent decline in GDP for every one percent of less oil available. Just imagine: a 10 percent drop means a 40 percent decrease in global growth!

It is only prudent to prepare for the inevitable. Our earth has no expiry date, but our resources do. We have built a society on the assumption of cheap and inexhaustible energy supplies. Coupland was right to imagine a "peak oil" scenario.



Bert Hielema (bert@hielema.ca) has lived in now-notorious Tweed since 1975. His blog is at hielema.ca.

Words from Wild Horses

Kenny Warkentin

You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough.

Galatians 5:7-9



This past year, I have really been thinking a lot about these verses. They have come to mind on more than one occasion and so I've been meditating on what a little yeast can do. In context, the yeast is sin and the dough is the body of Christ. Having worked as a baker for a few years, I can relate to this analogy. It is true how yeast works its way through the whole batch of dough. It doesn't just stay in one part of the dough, but multiplies until it has gone throughout the whole batch. It begins to bubble; air pockets form and the whole loaf rises. It also begins to smell yeasty, which doesn't go away until you bake the bread.

As I look at my own life, I can see how discipleship and community have played key roles in my journey with Christ. As I walked in community with others, specifically as I welcomed discipleship, it allowed others to know me and to speak life to me. They asked me hard questions. These relationships also allow for the calling of sin in our lives. We need each other. When we decide to do life on our own and refuse discipleship, we can begin to stumble and fall, and we may begin to bend Scripture and believe things to be untrue.

Away from the truth

I remember when I began to slip. It was kind of easy. I began reading publications that believed that homosexuality was okay. That the Biblical understanding was translated wrong, that its context was wrong, that the word of God was not relevant to today's living. Basically, I began looking for other ideas, other than the word of God, to validate my same gender attraction. I slowly began moving away from the faith community and began hanging out with those with a more liberal faith, who said "God made you this way." It validated my feelings. It felt good. It was no longer a challenge or a hardship to believe that God made me this way. I allowed the yeast to work its way into my life. It began to fester and bubble, and it began to smell. I had a different aroma now. An aroma of independence, an aroma of anger: being gay was it and no one was

A little yeast

going to tell me different. You could say I was being disciplined but instead of Godly discipleship, I was allowing the world and liberal theologians to sway me from the truth of who I really was and who God created me to be.

When I look back, I wish that people would have had the courage and love to talk with me about my decisions. Maybe I was already too hardened to listen, but maybe something could have been said to me that would have triggered a repentant heart.

Knowing what I know now, and having walked this journey out, I have come to a place of knowing who God really created me to be: a man created to worship the one true God, created in his image, and not created as a mistake. Rather, I'm created with gifts and qualities that are continually being redeemed and restored by – in the community of others – submitting my whole life to God. I recognize that I need others and I need accountability and discipleship.

If I have a friend beginning to believe lies or living in a way that may harm himself or others, I love him or her enough to bring it up. A little yeast in my friends' lives not only affects them but also affects me and those around us. When I allowed the yeast of identifying myself as gay to fester, it affected a lot of people around me. It spread to my family, my friends and my church community. So I love my friends enough to say something. Not in a condemning or self-righteous attitude, but rather one with humility and love. I've been there, done that and know the importance of walking with one another in community. It doesn't always feel good, but in the end it is of value and worth to you and those around you.

Kenny Warkentin
(kennyp66@gmail.com)

works full time as an
urban missionary with
Living Waters Canada and
is an artist and musician
He lives in Winnipeg with



his wife and daughter.

I will not hurry through this day!
Lord, I will listen by the way,
To humming bees and singing birds,
To speaking trees and friendly words;
And for the moments in between
Seek glimpses of Thy great Unseen.

I will not hurry through this day;
I will take time to think and pray;
I will look up into the sky,
Where fleecy clouds and swallows fly;
And somewhere in the day, maybe
I will catch whispers, Lord, from Thee!

Ralph Spaulding Cushman

News

Bhutto's son: Pakistanis who praise Taseer assassination are 'covert blasphemers'



Salman Taseer (r.), the governor of Pakistan's Punjab Province, listens to Pakistani Christian woman Aasia Bibi (l.) at a prison in Sheikhupura near Lahore, Pakistan. Taseer was assassinated on Tuesday, Jan. 4.

Issam Ahmed

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (CSM) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the son of slain former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, has called those who celebrated the murder of a liberal politician who sought changes to the country's blasphemy laws "the real blasphemers."

His fiery remarks, which were made at the Pakistani High Commission in London on January 11, mark the toughest stance yet taken by the leadership of the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in response to the assassination of Salman Taseer in early January.

But the fact that the speech was given in English by a politician abroad may limit its impact at home. More

broadly, say experts, it highlights the dwindling avenues of communication between liberal, often foreign-educated Pakistanis and the increasingly conservative majority.

Mr. Taseer, the governor of Punjab, had personally campaigned for the release of Aasia Bibi, a Christian woman awaiting the death penalty on charges of insulting the prophet Muhammad, and had called the blasphemy law a "black law." Following his death, People's Party leaders had come under fire from liberals for not doing enough to champion the cause for which Taseer lost his life. No other mainstream PPP leader, including Bhutto Zardari's father, President Asif Ali Zardari, has pressed for reform of the law.

Leaders appear more confident condoning the blasphemy laws and Taseer's assassination. Indeed, in what observers feel was an effort to underscore his own religious credos, Interior Minister Rehman Malik went as far as to say he would shoot any blasphemer himself.

Zardari's fighting words?

In his speech, Bhutto Zardari, who is co-chair of the PPP, showed no such equivocation, and added a touch of bravado. "To the Christian and other minority communities in Pakistan, we will defend you," he said, adding: "Those who wish to harm you for a crime you did not commit will have to go through me first."

In response to clerics who warned Muslims not to mourn Taseer's death, he offered a stark warning.

"Those who attack my religion, specially [sic] those who corrupt its peaceful message, you are what I call covert blasphemers and you will be defeated," he said, adding: "This will be our jihad."



Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, speaks at a memorial meeting for slain Salman Taseer.

Some 50,000 people attended a rally organized by religious parties in support of Taseer's killer, Malik Mumtaz Hussain Qadri, and the blasphemy laws in Karachi on Jan. 9. A day after Taseer's death, 500 leading religious scholars from the Barelwi sect of Islam signed a petition praising the killer.

Pope Benedict XVI, who demanded a repeal of Pakistan's blasphemy law one day later, was also criticized by

powerful Islamist politician Liaquat Baloch. "The Pope's statement is an open invitation for clash of civilizations and a bid to plunge the entire world into a deadly war," he told the Associated Press of Pakistan.

By contrast, liberal voices denouncing the killing and the

blasphemy law have been limited to candle-light vigils and marches attracting numbers in the low-hundreds, mainly in Taseer's hometown of Lahore.

Liberals have also been active in the English-language news media and on Facebook and Twitter – mediums that do not reach the majority of Pakistanis.

Context of those comments

In such a caustic atmosphere, Bhutto Zardari's comments are nothing if not brave, says Pakistani columnist Mosharraf Zaidi. "Bilawal's family; his mother, grandfather and uncles have a 30-year history of not fearing death," he says. Bilawal Zardari's mother Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in 2007, his grandfather Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was hanged by former dictator General Zia-ul-Haq, and both his maternal uncles were murdered.

But, adds Mr. Zaidi: "It's not a direct challenge to the Pakistani right wing, because to make that challenge, you have to be standing in Pakistan speaking in Urdu."

Zaidi believes that the PPP leadership have abdicated their responsibilities by leaving the moral burden of responding to extremism on the shoulders of the 20-something Bilawal Zardari, currently a student at Oxford University.

A widening wealth and cultural gap between affluent and poor Pakistanis makes it difficult for opposing sides to communicate with one another, he adds.

"All of these things are wrapped in a broader class and cultural war of which [Taseer] was also a victim ... the fact is, there is an echo chamber amongst English speaking Pakistanis who respond to events with moral outrage and express that moral outrage to each other and to what is largely a Western audience," he says.

Odds and Trends

Don't catch cold

A recent report from the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) confirms what my mother always said: being outside in the cold doesn't mean you're more likely to get a cold. Even though more people seem to catch colds during the winter, research has not demonstrated a link between cold weather exposure and infection. The difference might be explained by behavioural changes, such as spending more time inside close to others, or lower winter humidity levels, in which viruses spread more easily than during more humid seasons. Phew. Recess can resume.

Makes sense

Every grade two kid knows that we have five senses, right? Sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing. An interesting article in the Spring 2010 journal of *Harvard Medicine*, however, argues that humans have far more than five senses. Aristotle named the original five, but good arguments can be made for extending the definition. We can sense balance and acceleration, pain, body and limb position, and temperature. We also talk of someone having a poor sense of time or a good sense of direction.

Daddy's turn

Pregnant women face a lot of pressure to be healthy in order to give their growing babies a good start in life. But while fifty years of science have demonstrated clear links between mother's actions and baby's health, hardly any researchers have considered the role that fathers play. "It would turn out to be a scientific oversight of significant proportions," writes Emily Anthes in "The Bad Daddy Factor" (*Miller-McCune*, Jan/Feb. 2011).

In the 1960s, Gladys Friedler discovered that the offspring of male rats who had taken morphine developed abnormalities. Colleagues didn't believe her research. Since then, however, a growing body of studies has proven her correct. Fathers do impact the possibility of birth defects – alcohol, cigarettes, prescription medication, and exposure to paints and pesticides can all "influence the health of men's future kids." Research in this area is still underfunded and under-publicized, in part because the findings are so unpopular. Even the idea of "men's reproductive health" sounds strange.

But it has huge implications, Anthes argues. About 60 percent of all birth defects are unknown; if even a few could be understood in terms of fathers, babies would benefit. Young men today need to know that their lifestyle choices might affect their ability to have healthy children. Maybe it's time to bring both prospective parents to those first few doctor's visits. After all, it's going to be a long time, as one scientist remarks, before we see signs in bars saying "Men who drink should not reproduce."

Angela Reitsma Bick

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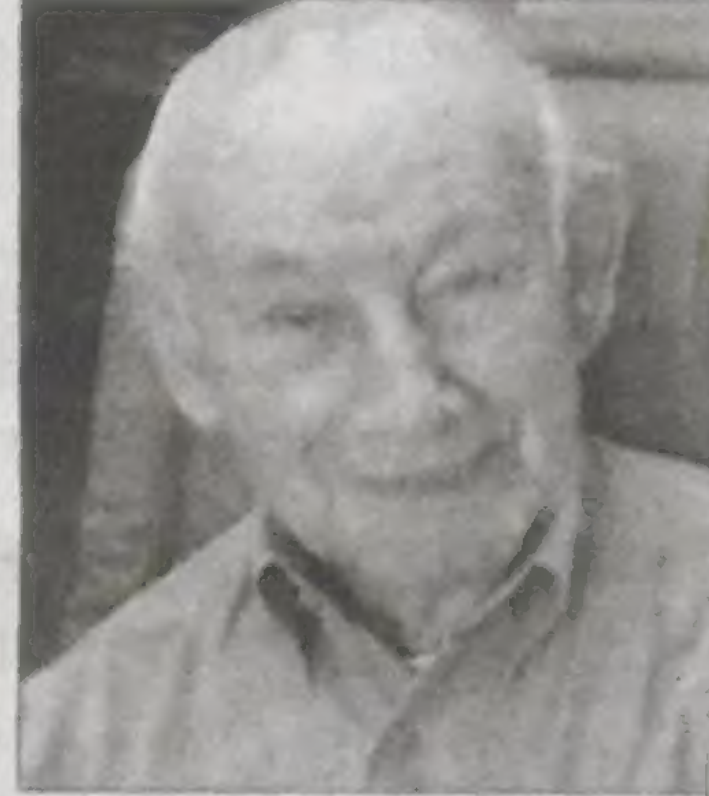
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Classifieds

Anniversaries		Obituaries			
<p>1951 February 1 2011</p> <p>In praise and thankfulness to our heavenly Father we celebrate as a family the 60th Anniversary of</p> <p>LIES AND ADRIE MAST (nee Oorebeek)</p> <p>We love you Dad and Mom, Opa and Oma, and pray you have many more years together.</p> <p>Meeke & George Claus, Woodstock, ON Allan & Jennifer Claus – Jackson & Carson, Barrie, ON Jennifer & Wim deVries – Kayla, Emily, Seelah & Aidan, Brantford, ON Arie & Cindy Mast – Erin, Lucas, Port Perry, ON Leona & Don Gallagher – Michelle, Jenna, Stephen, Ballantrae, ON Lauren & Tim Mirecki – William, Jeremiah & Naomi, Markham ON - Audrey & Eddie McMeekin – Heather, Craig, Bradford, ON Pete & Diane Mast – Jessica, Lindsay, Sarah, Sharon, ON Ashley & Josh Hernandez, Richmond Hill, ON Alex & Joanne Mast – Jeremy, Jesse, Holland Landing, ON</p> <p>Tollendale Village address: G4 - 282 Hurst Drive, Barrie ON L4N 7S6 Phone: 705-733-8193</p>	<p>ALBERTJE (Betty) VANDERBYL</p> <p>It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our dear wife, Mom and Beppe into glory to be with her Lord and Saviour.</p> <p>Betty peacefully passed away in her sleep on Saturday, January 1, 2011 at Stevenson Memorial Hospital, Alliston at 84 years of age.</p> <p>Beloved wife of Willem (Bill) Vanderbyl. Dear Mom to Ed (Lynn) Vanderbyl and Liz (Don) McLardy. Beppe to 11 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. Also survived by her 2 sisters Dieuwke Toering and Iemkje VanderVeen.</p> <p>We take comfort in the words of Job 19:25-27 <i>I know that my Redeemer Lives....</i></p> <p>Home address: 3721 Line 12 RR 3, Cookstown ON L0L 1L0</p>	<p>HENDRIK (Henry) Vos</p> <p>Born Beilen, NL, 15 Oct. 1914, died Toronto, 11 Nov. 2010.</p> <p>Henry Vos spent the Second World War in hiding from the Germans who occupied the Netherlands, an experience that shaped his long and challenging life. In 1954, he left his bakery business and, with his wife Alie (Hartman) and children Jane and John, emigrated to Canada.</p> <p>He bought a broiler chicken operation in Huron County in 1957 and lived there until he retired.</p> <p>Of fundamental importance to him was that he always did his best. He was a strong personality, a meticulous man, a generous man, who dearly loved his family and was blessed by the addition of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The last was born a week before his 96th birthday, giving him great joy.</p> <p>Henry was the last of the six Vos brothers. A beloved sister, Grietje, died in childhood. He leaves his daughter Jane Moore (and Michael) of Toronto, son John Vos (and Shirley) of Sarasota, Fla.; grandchildren Alex Moore (and Nicolette), Megan Moore (and Jonathan), Oliver Moore (and Katrina), Eric Vos and David Vos; great-grandchildren Sam, Jacob, Joshua and Daniel.</p> <p>Henry and his family were blessed in his last months by the loving kindness of the staff at the Meighen Retirement Residence and by outstanding care by his many personal support workers.</p> <p>Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 1: "What is your only comfort, both in life and in death?"</p> <p>Contact: J. Moore, 42 Foxbar Road, Toronto ON M4V 2G6</p>	<p>1951 February 1 2011</p> <p>Rotterdam, The Netherlands Grand Rapids, Michigan</p> <p>With thankfulness and praise to God for his goodness to our parents and Opa & Oma we joyfully celebrate the 60th Wedding Anniversary of</p> <p>REV. GERARD AND MARGARET BOUMA (Loos)</p> <p>and also the 60th Anniversary of Dad's Ordination into the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.</p>  <p>Dad and Mom, we are grateful for the godly example you have set before us.</p> <p><i>As for me and my house we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15</i></p> <p>With love from your children Micky, Martin, Keith, Joanne, their spouses, 10 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren</p> <p>Open House Sat. Jan. 29 from 2 - 4 at their residence 3068 Breton Terrace - 2500 Breton Woods Dr Phone: 616-827-8669 Grand Rapids MI 49512</p>	<p>Safely in the arms of Jesus.</p> <p>On January 3, 2011, with his family at his side,</p> <p>RICHARD VANNETTEN (1937-2011)</p> <p>passed on peacefully to be with his Lord.</p> <p>He leaves behind his beloved wife of 48 years, Frances, as well as his children, Sonya with husband Ivan, Jeff with friend Joanne and Eric with wife Rachel, as well as his grandchildren: Richard, Kimberly, Jared, Andrew, Kassandra, Alysha, Taryn, Gesina and Braedyn.</p> <p>Loved brother of Gesinus and wife Hiltje, and Willem and wife Frieda of Holland. Sadly missed by his whole extended family and many friends.</p> <p>The celebration of Rick's life was held at Hebron Christian Reformed Church (Whitby) on Friday, January 7. Interment followed at Pine Grove Cemetery, Prince Albert. Afterward, the family received friends at Hope Christian Reformed Church, Prince Albert. If desired, memorial donations can be made to Scugog Christian School, Prince Albert.</p> 	<p>DIRK BOOY</p> <p>September 19, 1922 to December 23, 2010</p> <p>Just before Christmas, Dirk went to be with his Lord.</p> <p>His life's theme was based on 1 Peter 4:10: <i>Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.</i></p> <p>This is what he lived by, and leaves us as his legacy.</p> <p>He was the beloved husband of Geerte Booy, and loving father of Cathy (John) Kalverda, Margriet (Albert) Aasman, Johanna (Peter) Buisman, Dirk (Joanne) Booy, and Steve (Sylvia) Booy. He also leaves behind 16 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Condolences can be sent to Geerte Booy Apt 1604 - Peace Tower - 45 Kingknoll Drive Brampton ON L6Y 5P2</p> 

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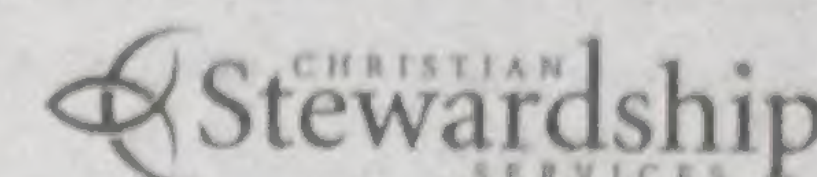
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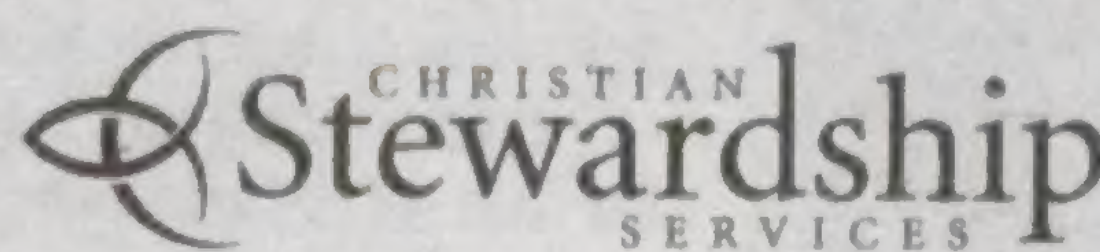
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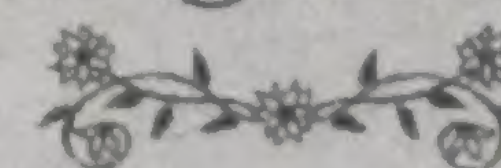
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News



Immigration alterations: New criteria and funding cuts could mean fewer newcomers to Canada

Are immigrants still welcome?

Harold Alkema

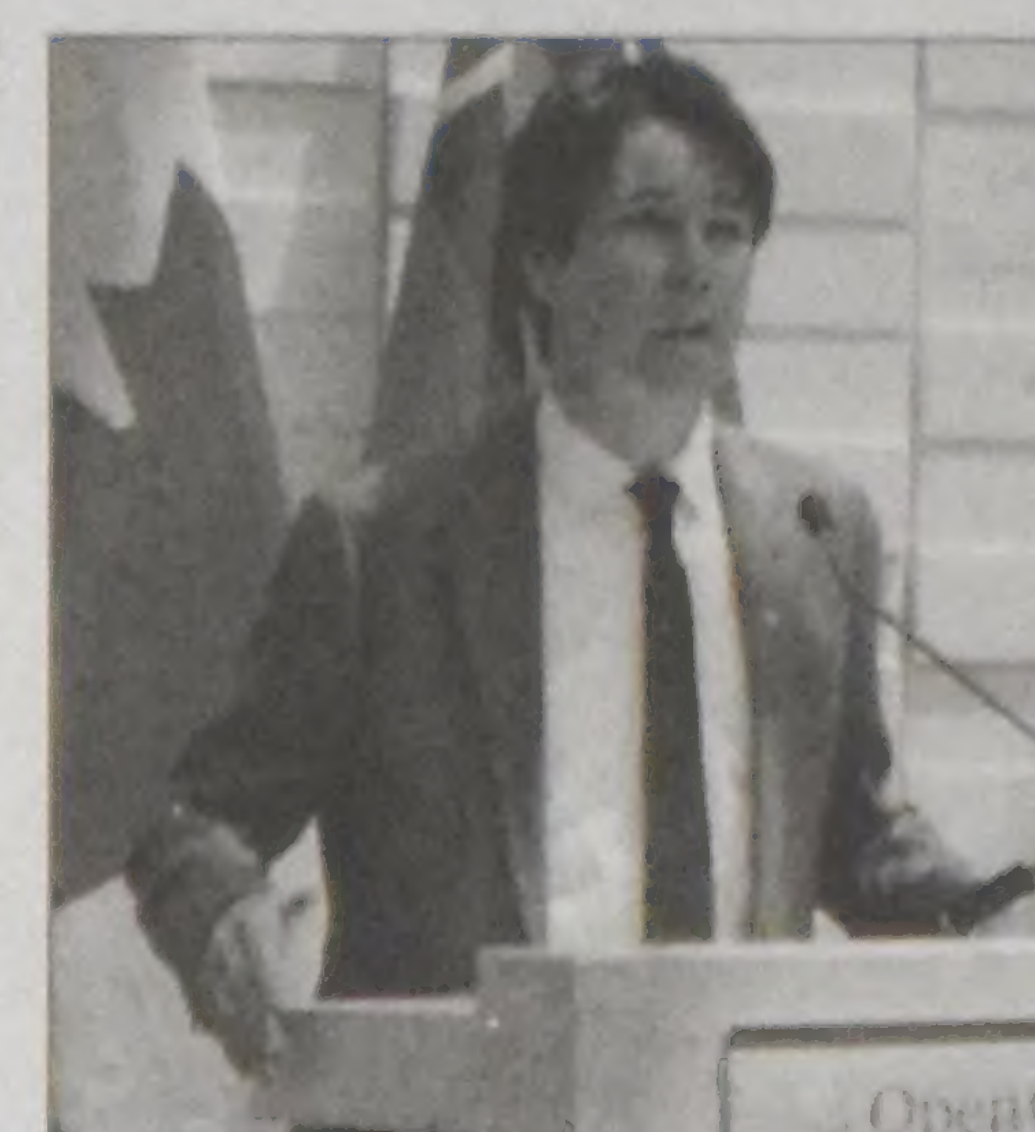
OTTAWA, Ont. — Recently, The Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the world's Shia Ismaili Muslims, praised Canada's pluralism as an "asset of enormous global value." Additionally, The Conference Board of Canada, a think-tank, recently credited immigrants with driving innovation in the country. In spite of the mutual benefits of Canada's open immigration policy, drastic changes are in the offing and soon it will be more difficult for immigrants to enter the country. Since taking power in 2006, the Harper government has toughened the citizenship test and doubled the lump sum required to gain quick access as an investor. It has also presented bills to fine and jail people-traffickers and detain their clients. Additional legislation proposes to penalize unauthorized immigration advisers who charge fees. (The bill in question is to be called "The Cracking Down on Crooked Consultants Act").

Taken together, these changes could greatly reduce the total number of refugees and immigrants who make their way into Canada.

Shrinking welcome mat

Much of the motivation for these changes is economic. The federal government has altered the profile of immigrants who are accepted to give priority to the skilled over the needy. The Harper government has cut the refugee intake by 36 percent and imposed visa requirements on visitors from Mexico and the Czech Republic, some of whom it accused of exploiting loopholes in the asylum system. The only category of immigrants to have grown significantly since 2005 is temporary workers, who rarely require state support. Another factor is the recession, which has pushed up unemployment. To some extent, incumbent Canadians now fear the increased job market competition that immigrants might create. Some groups have claimed that immigrants also increase demand for scarce resources and therefore augment the price of these necessities. The federal housing agency, for example, pointed to immigration as one reason why renters are having trouble finding accommodation in large cities.

Security concerns are also part of the rationale in restricting the level of immigration. A report on national security published last month by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, a non-partisan think-tank, listed "uncontrolled immigration" as one of three foreseeable threats to Canada. Further, public opinion in Canada has been affected by a European backlash against immigrants and by fears of terrorist attacks (of which Canada has been free in recent years). While a terrorist attack on Canadian soil might not seem like an imminent threat, there are political reasons for the Harper government to support limitations on immigration and refugee claims. Frank Graves, a pollster with EKOS research group, says that Conservative voters are twice as likely to believe Canada has too many immigrants as are opposition supporters. Public hostility to immigrants also grew after a ship carrying almost 500 Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka arrived on the country's west coast in August 2010.



Ontario Immigration Minister, Eric Hoskins.

the decision on those who work for the organizations in question, Hoskins said the following: "Their specialties can't be replaced; they are upset at what they called the 'blunt' and 'brutal' manner the news was delivered to them, in a letter, two weeks before the holiday. None understands the justification and rationale behind it."

Limited changes

Even though stricter criteria for entry and cuts in funding pose serious problems for immigrants, the changes to the immigration system are limited in scope. There is little possibility that Canada will close the door to newcomers entirely. Instead, the most recent changes should be viewed as minor

tweaks to Canada's system of immigration rather than a complete reversal of past policy. Further, there is evidence that immigrants will continue to be welcomed. A government conducted poll noted that only about one in four Canadians thought that there were too many immigrants in the country, and about half of the respondents thought that the current number of immigrants was about right. Aklilu Wendaferew,



Harsha Walia, an activist with No One is Illegal, at the G20.

Criticisms

Given that the recent changes to the immigration system seem to feed into some of the tensions, fears and political divisions apparent in Canadian society, they are controversial. Hamdi Mohamed, director of an immigrant-settlement organization in Ottawa, says that the Canadian media does not demonstrate much support for immigrant groups. "If you read the newspapers, the tone is quite negative and sometimes quite racist," Mohamed commented. Other critics have noted that the federal government's proposed detention of refugees trafficked by smugglers violates Canadian law and international agreements.

Perhaps most importantly, many are angry over federal government cuts to immigrant support agencies. In total, Ottawa has cut \$53 million from immigrant organizations across the country, excluding Quebec. More than \$43 million of that amount will come from organizations based in Ontario, many of which will be forced to shut down in the absence of federal government support. Ontario Immigration Minister Eric Hoskins said that the cuts were unfair and would be a major disadvantage to immigrants. Commenting on the impact of

who works with the homeless and Ethiopian immigrants in Toronto, says that employers are not reluctant to hire immigrants. Moreover, in Toronto discrimination is politically dangerous. In Canada's most populous city, immigrants and their children constitute a majority. Thus, it seems reasonable to hope that Canada will remain an attractive destination for immigrants even if fewer of them are able to make their way to our shores.

Harold Alkema is a student of public policy at Carleton University. He lives in Ottawa with his wife.



What 'No One Is Illegal' means

No One Is Illegal is a group of activists in Toronto, self-described as "immigrants, refugees and allies who fight for the rights of all migrants to live with dignity and respect." They see immigration and border policies in Canada as racist, and work at opposing those policies, as well as the international policies responsible for the poor living conditions that necessitate emigration.

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